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Stefania Ciccone
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Il Cortegiano

I

Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* purports to describe a conversation among a number of people gathered at the court of the Duke and Duchess of Urbino in the Spring of 1507. They had proposed, as one of their after-supper "games," the ideal courtier as a theme for a discussion extending over four nights. Some kind of actual discussion seems to have been the basis for the book, and Castiglione himself was no doubt present at it, though he follows the modest precedent of Plato in the *Phaedo* and represents himself as absent in England. He was not able to get down to completing the book, however, until some years later, and a good deal happened in that time. The Duke of Urbino, Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, was a childless invalid who had adopted his young nephew Francesco della Rovere as his heir. Francesco, who makes an attractive appearance at the end of Book One as a boy of seventeen, succeeded his uncle, and retained Castiglione in his service. He also committed two murders, and was expelled from Urbino by Pope Leo X, who replaced him with his own nephew. Castiglione was forced into temporary retirement by this, and thereby gained the leisure to finish his book. Several of those who figure in the dialogue were at that time refugees from other courts and cities — Giuliano de Medici from Florence, the Fregoso brothers from Genoa, Castiglione himself from Mantua — but many of them were senior statesmen by the time the book was finished. Giuliano de Medici, though he died in 1516, lived long enough to see his family restored to power in Florence and his brother elected to the Papacy.

It was part of Castiglione's code that gentlemen who wrote should be in no hurry to entrust what they wrote to the printing press. The press was useful for scholarly editions of the Classics, and, in the more revolutionary England, for religious and political polemic, but poets, even prose writers, who belonged to the gentry tended to keep their work in manuscript and pass it around to

friends. The final release to the printer was often accompanied by protests about the forcing of the author's hand by importunate readers of the manuscript. In Castiglione's case the importunate reader was the famous Vittoria della Colonna, and Castiglione's disclaimer seems to have been genuine enough. *Il Cortegiano* was not in fact published until 1528, fourteen years after completion, and Castiglione died in the next year. Although Castiglione of course wrote other things, *Il Cortegiano* was not so much a book by him as his book, his legacy to posterity, and the longer he postponed its publication, the more it receded into a distant past, as an increasing number of those featured in it died. The retrospective feeling about the book, the sense of its celebration of an ideal already left behind by history, was as obvious to Castiglione himself as it is to us, and forms part of the book's intention.

Many of those who belonged to Castiglione's original group are still well known, partly because they had the sense to get their portraits painted by Raphael or Titian. Castiglione alludes to himself also as a kind of verbal painter, and speaks in his preface of the skill of ". . .far parer per arte di prospettiva quello che non è" (L.D.I.). The remark suggests an interesting link between portrait-painting and the ideology of an ascendent class. In English history, for example, we derive much of our sense of Henry VIII's character from Holbein's portrait of him standing stockily with his feet wide apart, his cruel little eyes glittering out of his terrifying face. And most of our feeling for the glamour and romance of the cause of the seventeenth-century Cavaliers comes from Van Dyck's portraits of Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria, and from the haunting melancholy and charm with which he invested those two rather commonplace people. Similarly, it is Raphael who preserves for us the sly wit of Bibbiena, the imperturbable calm of Emilia Pia, and the melancholy sensitivity of Castiglione himself.

However, other aspects of culture were developing besides painting which were much less tender to the sensibilities of a declining ruling class. Two Genoese whose names are familiar to us if not to Castiglione, Christopher Columbus and John Cabot, had begun the exploration of America that eventually shifted power from the Mediterranean city-states to the Atlantic nations, England, France, Spain, Portugal. In many respects *Il Cortegiano* was the testament of a disappearing culture to the emergent seaboard countries. It was Francis I of France who urged Castiglione to complete his book for the sake of posterity, Charles V who described its author as one of the finest gentlemen in the world, and Elizabethan England which responded eagerly to the book (in the translation of Sir Thomas Hoby published in 1561),

and found in Sir Philip Sidney the embodiment of Castiglione's ideal.

The two essential facts of Renaissance society were the prince and the courtier, and it is not surprising that two of the most influential Renaissance books should be Machiavelli's *Il Principe* and Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, which were written at much the same time. But the city-states of Italy, with their intense local loyalties and lack of national feeling, could not provide a broad enough economic base to compete with the courts of France and England, where the destruction of the feudal system had replaced the rebellious barons of the Middle Ages with the servants of a highly centralized monarchy. In England, the rise of a wealthy middle class limited the power of the prince — Henry VIII was the only king of England to have the kind of absolute power that was common on the Continent for many centuries later — and the courtier ideal did not last long after the death of Elizabeth I. But it was a very intense ideal while it lasted, and its incorporation into Elizabethan literature, including some of Shakespeare's plays, has helped to preserve it for the English-speaking world.

We have noted something wistful and nostalgic in Castiglione's tribute to what was even then a vanishing ideal, even though he deprecates such an attitude in his introduction to the second book. At the time of the discussion the glory of Urbino itself was in decline: its greatness had been due to Guidobaldo's illustrious father Federico, but Guidobaldo was prevented by ill health from achieving much in either war or peace, and the court was held together by the Duchess. The importance of this fact for Castiglione's argument will meet us later. In the next decade it became increasingly obvious that the real powers in Italy were France, Spain and the Empire (at that time linked to Spain), and that what they did would determine Italian history, regardless of how many princes and courtiers modelled themselves on Italian handbooks. Castiglione died two years after the sack of Rome: in that brutal context, an idealized courtier looks rather woebegone, and Castiglione himself a quixotic figure, without the schizophrenic mental armour that kept the original Quixote serenly believing in his fantastic code. But the great beauty and power of the book clearly derives from something other than the historical context, and we must try to see what this is.

Castiglione defines both his genre and his literary tradition when he says in his introduction: "...mi contenterò aver errato con Platone, Senofonte e Marco Tullio, lassando il disputare del mondo intelligibile e delle Idee; tra le quali, sì come (secondo quella opinione) è la Idea della perfetta Repubblica, e del perfetto

Re, e del perfetto Oratore, così è ancora quella del perfetto Cortegiano" (L.D.III). Central to Italian humanism was the admiration of Plato not merely as a philosopher but as a literary artist. A century earlier the humanist Berni (Leonardo Aretino) had spoken of the urbanity of the Platonic dialogue, of how well people kept their temper in the discussions, of the pleasantness and fluency of the style, and of the pervasiveness of the quality called in Greek *charis*, of which Castiglione's "grace" is a fair translation. Castiglione's genre is essentially that of the Platonic symposium (along with its Latin developments in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* and the like), in which a discussion is maintained on a topic which has a Platonic form or idea behind all its manifestations, with the hope that eventually something of that form or idea could be glimpsed by those taking part. Thus something of the Platonic form of love, also one of Castiglione's main themes, is glimpsed at the end of the dialogue which is explicitly called the *Symposium*.

Plato's dialogues are often concerned with issues in education, but do not envisage a curriculum or organized programme for education much beyond conversations with Socrates. The question of what an educated man ought to know and what his social responsibilities are arises later, and focusses, with Cicero and later Quintilian, on the figure of the orator. In Cicero's *De Oratore*, one of the books most influential for Renaissance culture, the orator becomes the type of the educated man (*doctus vir*), with a scope and range of extraordinary versatility, making up in brilliance what it might lack in depth. For Quintilian at least the orator's training was moral as well as intellectual. The oratorical ideal retained a good deal of prestige through the Middle Ages, when most educated people were trained either for the church or the law, and in either case would need to know how to speak. Hence a central place was given to rhetoric, and as rhetoric is a study of the figuration of language as well as of verbal persuasion, it was an excellent training for poets as well.

With the Renaissance the prince emerged as both the head and the centre of his society, and with him came the revival of the form we may call the *cyropaedia*, the treatise on the education of an ideal prince, whose training would be an educational model because he would be the most important person in his society to educate. The original *Cyropaedia* of Xenophon, to which Castiglione refers, dealt with the training of Cyrus, one of the authentically great men of the ancient world, and a legendary figure in both Classical and Biblical literature. Erasmus' *Institute of a Christian Prince*, published in 1516 when Castiglione was working on *Il Cortegiano*, established the *cyropaedia* as a central Renaissance

genre. In England, the great epic of Elizabethan literature, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, is in one of its aspects a cyropaedia, an educational treatise on the qualities of the ideal prince, identified with the romantic hero Prince Arthur.

The sixteenth century was one of the world's greatest ages in educational theory, and in choosing the courtier for his theme, Castiglione must have felt that he had a more up to date model than the orator and a more practicable one than the prince. Much of the medieval oratorical ideal remained in the Renaissance, because non-military professional careers were still mainly concerned with the church and the law. The immense prestige of the Church as an employing institution is visible all through Castiglione's book, despite his efforts to keep everything explicitly religious out of the discussion, and to construct an essentially secular ideal of education. We may note that three of those who take part in his symposium were later made cardinals. But shifting the model from orator to courtier gave it more concrete social reference. As for the cyropaedia form, it would have been difficult to discuss the perfect prince in such a genre without sinking into flattery of the prince nearest at hand, and as this was the invalid Duke of Urbino, who retired to bed after supper and took no part in the conversations, such flattery would have been largely wasted in any case.

As for Plato's *Republic*, we can hardly ascribe much direct influence from it, or from Plato generally, on Castiglione, although he had a profoundly Platonic cast of mind, and Platonic idealism appealed to him deeply. "Pur io estimo, in ogni cosa esser la sua perfezione, avvenga che nascosta . . ." (I.13), he says. But he is clearly anxious to avoid the Utopian theme itself, which would mean by-passing the education of the individual in favor of a theoretical regulating of society. Two major English writers, Spenser and Milton, expressed a preference for Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* over Plato's *Republic* as the more practical and concrete of the two books, and Castiglione also concerns himself only with what from his point of view were more or less practical possibilities.

Still, when we come to the fourth book, where the courtier's social function as an adviser to the prince is discussed, it seems clear that the courtier must have some vision of the form of society too, if he is to perform his duties intelligently. The subject of a cyropaedia may be the ideal prince, but the author of a cyropaedia could only be an ideal courtier, as Castiglione describes him, and his theory of education would have to derive itself from a social vision. It is, I think, the latent Utopian tone of Castiglione's dialogue, its implicit reference to a hidden perfection in society

itself, that makes it still relevant to us. Among the great educational books of that very fertile period, we have to place Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) in the first rank. In More's book there is a collision of views between Hythlodaye, the traveller who has been to Utopia and has returned a convinced Communist, and More himself, who listens to his narration. Hythlodaye is now a revolutionary who feels nothing can be done for Europe until private property is abolished and the various principalities replaced with something more like the Utopian republic. More represents himself, in contrast, as feeling rather that Hythlodaye should use his knowledge of Utopia to act as a counsellor to European princes, trying to inform their policies with something of the Utopian spirit. Castiglione's courtier has no Utopia to go to, but he has a similar informing vision to communicate.

II

The first book of *Il Cortegiano* opens the discussion, sets out the kind of person the courtier is to be, outlines the general range of what he should know, and sketches in the cultural context of his society. The main line of discussion is sustained first by Ludovico da Canossa, a reasonable and open-minded speaker, who expresses the general consensus (with some disagreement) that the courtier should be of noble birth, though as a matter of convenience more than as a feeling of propriety. It is not that one kind of man is inherently better than another, but that one of the most essential qualities of the courtier, as we shall see more fully in a moment, is spontaneity, doing things with the effortless ease of one accustomed to doing them from birth, which is simpler if in fact he has been accustomed to them from birth. If he is not nobly born, in other words, all his courtly qualities will be acquired, and the strain of acquiring them is likely to show through at some point.

The primary profession of the courtier is said to be military, but everything he does in war as well as peace is done as an amateur, leaving strategy to the professionals. One would expect him to know enough to be a commissioned officer: this is no doubt assumed, but all the emphasis is on his bearing and deportment, on manifesting his courage to the right people, on his ability to ride well (Castiglione had a special interest in horsemanship), and the like. Castiglione is not temperamentally much of a warrior, however, and he takes more pleasure in describing the courtier at peace and at play. Here again, one would expect that one reason for his being an amateur would be administrative: that is, he need not

be a great painter himself, but he should know who the best painters are, know why they are the best, and see to it that they are fully employed. One gets the impression, though, that Castiglione's prince does not delegate much authority to his courtiers, no doubt mainly because of the limited area of the Italian city-states. The English treatises in the same general genre, from Elyot's *Governour* (1531) to Milton in the next century, lay more stress on the educated man's responsibilities as a magistrate or deputy officer. Castiglione's courtier, in contrast, seems to be almost entirely a court functionary.

The scope of the courtier's peacetime activities covers mainly sports and the fine arts, including literature. The courtier should be an amateur poet, writing gracefully and wittily within a convention; he should understand something of music, painting and sculpture. Many fine and eloquent things are said of these arts, especially music, where the musical amateur's preference for the single melodic line with an instrumental accompaniment — normally the lute — over elaborate contrapuntal structures like the madrigal is made clear. Some of the issues discussed seem rather barren themselves: for instance, is sculpture superior to painting because it has one more dimension, or inferior because of its more restricted subject-matter? The issue is raised apparently only to make it clear that both arts belong in a civilized environment.

In the verbal arts, scholarly erudition is not stressed to the degree that it is in the orator's training: what the courtier knows is far less important than how he displays his knowledge, as in the apt placing of quotations. The strong humanist prejudice against using words not generally employed in conversation is felt throughout: in the third book, discussions of Aristotelian philosophy are sharply broken off by the two chief women, the Duchess and Emilia Pia, who tell the speakers that they must speak so as to be understood. We are obviously in an age when the technical language of scholastic philosophy is giving way to the more colloquial idiom used by most of the major philosophers between Bacon and Leibnitz, who tended to be socially amateurs rather than school philosophers. We notice too that while Tuscan has, among Italian dialects, the immense prestige conferred by Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, no centre dominates the whole country in the way that London dominated England and Paris France, making its own dialect the standard form of the language and reducing all others to rustic or clowns' speech.

But whatever the courtier does, he must do it with "grace":

everything leads up to that as the final manifestation of courtliness. Grace is almost impossible to define: it eludes verbal formulation, because "...chi ha grazia, quello è grato ..." (I.24), and those who do not have it are unlikely to know what it is. Grace is manifested however in two ways. One is by *sprezzatura*, another untranslatable word conveying the sense of masterly ease, spontaneity, the tossed-off quality that shows nothing of the long practice that has led up to it. The other is by *disinvoltura*, the grace of bodily movements, the repose of the trained athlete. The courtier must demonstrate these qualities in athletics, in riding (in almost all European languages the words for members of the aristocracy are derived from horse-riding), and whenever he attempts poetry or music. "Però si po dir quella esser vera arte, che non appare esser arte; né piú in altro si ha da poner studio, che nel nasconderla ..." (I.26). This is of course a very ancient principle, and is also reinforced by the tradition of the orator, who tries to conceal the fact that he is persuading. Even so one wonders why there is so heavy an emphasis on these qualities. I think there are two answers, one relatively superficial, the other more profound.

The superficial answer is that the courtier is a member of the aristocracy, and it is the social function of the aristocracy to put on a show. To use a criterion that Castiglione does not, the aristocracy illustrates for the rest of the community the level of civilized, leisurely, privileged living that their taxes are supporting. The association of aristocracy with showmanship runs through all human history: the Americans, with no hereditary aristocracy, have, with a fine sense of fitness, made one out of their entertainers. Castiglione thinks of the courtiers as primarily under the eyes of other courtiers: "...e veggansi i gentilomini nei spettaculi pubblici alla presenza de' popoli, di donne e di gran signori" (I.21), he says. But especially in the second book, the sense of the courtier as under the eyes of the rest of the community is also present. In any case, what Thorstein Veblen calls "conspicuous consumption" is essential not only to the morale of the gentry themselves but to that of the rest of society, which sees in its aristocracy the visible models and embodiments of the flower and fruit of civilization.

We have derived two words from the metaphor of the masked actor: hypocrite and person. The former contains a moral value-judgement, the latter does not. If we compare Castiglione on the courtier with Machiavelli on the prince, we see a remarkable parallel: both are constantly on view: what they are seen to do is, socially speaking, what they are; their reputations are the most important part of their identity, and their functional reality is their appearance. The difference is that Machiavelli's prince, being the

man who must make the decisions, must accept the large element of hypocrisy involved; must understand how and why the reputation for virtue is more important for him than the hidden reality of virtue. It is essential for the prince to be reputed liberal, Machiavelli says, though he is probably better off if in reality he saves his money. For the courtier, whose social function is ornamental rather than operative, the goal is an appearance which has entirely absorbed the reality, a persona or mask which is never removed even when asleep. In regard to women, we are told that men "...sempre temono essere dall'arte ingannati" (I.40), that is, of being manipulated. For the prince manipulation is essential; for the courtier it is not.

This really means that, considered as an educational ideal, the courtier's training goes in the direction, not of concealing a reality under a bravura performance, as the actor conceals his private identity on 'the stage, but of total candour and openness. To do things with "grace" is possible only if they are done with the practised skill that has descended from the consciousness to what we should now call the unconscious mind, and this in turn means that "grace" marks the total absorption of the courtier's education into the courtier's personality.

The second book, much the longest of the four, carries on from the first, and the main speaker, Federico Fregoso, adds little to what Ludovico had already said, except that Ludovico is a liberal-minded person and Fregoso is a stilted, not to say stupid, snob. Here the sense of being constantly under social inspection extends to a feeling of stage fright. The courtier should avoid such sports as wrestling (recommended in the first book), not merely because the straining and heaving involved makes *sprezzatura* impossible, but because the courtier might be defeated by someone of inferior rank, which would be unseemly: "...perché sta troppo male e troppo è brutta cosa e for della dignità vedere un gentilomo vinto da un villano, e massimamente alla lotta ..." (II.10). We catch a glimpse of the extent to which in practice an aristocracy is really a kind of army of occupation. We also notice an increasing influence as we go on of Aristotle's ideal of the "magnanimous man," and of the principle that "È adunque securissima cosa ...governarsi sempre con una certa onesta mediocrità ..." (II.41). Aristotle, of course, had no notion of making his "middle way" into a cult of mediocrity, but Fregoso, with his emphasis on such matters as dressing in dark clothes and making a good impression even without speech, seems to be subsiding into the view that being inconspicuous is an essential part of grace.

Finally Bibbiena takes over, and, from an obviously immense

repertoire, gives a large number of examples of the kind of jokes, smart repartee, and stinging epigrams (*arguzie*) that the courtier may use. Jokes are very hard to translate, because of their reliance on accidents of language; more important, anecdotes quickly lose the flavor of the specific occasion of which they form part. Some of the stories turn on exaggeration, of the type known as "tall stories" in American folklore, and among them are some hardy perennials. The story of the people whose speech froze to ice on a cold day and could be heard only when it thawed out again is still going strong in a Victorian farce called *Handy Andy* (1845).

But although the anecdotes themselves often lack freshness, the principles behind them are of great educational importance. First, the emphasis put on them indicates the humanist principle of making conversation and ordinary speech the basis of all verbal communication. Second, the element of satire is heavily involved: the courtier is apparently intended to score off other people a good part of the time, and satire implies a moral principle. If a pompous and over-dignified person slips on a banana peeling, we find it funny: if a blind man does so we do not. What is involved, then, is the educational principle of making something that is naturally aggressive into something that is socially acceptable, or rather functional. Education is largely a matter of channelling energies, and energy without education tends to be anarchic, even brutal — modern taste does not find Bibbiena's examples invariably urbane, especially the practical jokes and hoaxes at the end. Then again, the success of a joke or epigram depends entirely on time and place, and the practice of such things imbues the courtier with that sense of distributing the rhythm of life which is the inner secret of grace.

The third book purports to describe a "Court Lady" as the complement of the male courtier. The main speaker is Giuliano de Medici, again a sensible and good-humored person, and a young man named Gasparo Pallavicino, with the omniscience of twenty-one, casts himself in the role of an extremely tedious misogynist. In this attempt to provide a mate for ". . . un Cortegiano che mai non fu né forse po essere" (II.100), there is a good deal of delicate humor. There is irony in the fact that although this group is said to have a heavy predominance of males, nevertheless it is held together by two women, and hence the crucial importance of women in the courtier's life is being demonstrated all through the disagreements in the discussion. An extraordinary amount of sexual hostility is expressed in this book, and again the reason is the same: sexuality is normally aggressive and domineering, and education is largely a matter of channelling its energy into something more in keeping with civilized life.

There is also a delicate humor in the way that Castiglione represents his courtiers as plunging away from the main theme into other areas, such as the distinctions of Aristotelian philosophy. In fact the main subject is so frequently torpedoed that it is hardly defined at all with any clarity. As Pallavicino says: ". . . ma il volerle dar cognizion di tutte le cose del mondo, ed attribuirle quelle virtú che cosí rare volte si son vedute negli omini, ancora nei seculi passati, è una cosa che né sopportare né appena ascoltar si po" (III.11). Anything rather than face the fact that courtiership means nothing whatever without women, and that the courtier has no real social function at all unless his society admits women on the same level.

Giuliano de Medici does his best: he points out to Pallavicino, with great courtesy, that "mankind" means men and women, not males, and that Pallavicino's attempt to align men and women respectively with Aristotle's form and matter is illiterate nonsense. He says that if women often desire to be men, it is not because men are better "Le meschine non desiderano l'esser omo per farsi piú perfette, ma per aver libertà, e fuggir quel dominio che gli omini si hanno vendicato sopra esse per sua propria autorità" (III.16). And yet even he can hardly discuss the subject without giving a long series of stories, mainly from Plutarch's essay on the virtues of women, about all the admirable females who commit suicide after rape — in other words, conform to male codes. The discussion also revolves around what is in the context a quite genuine problem: society and the Church insist that monogamous marriage is the only possible love-relation between a man and a woman, yet a far more promiscuous kind of love-making is obviously built in to the courtier's code. It is one of many issues which are too complex to be resolved in the argument.

III

In the fourth book the argument draws toward its climax, and focusses on the courtier's social function as the adviser of the prince. Some feel that he is to be not an adviser but a teacher, and this raises a problem. If he knows enough to teach the prince, he is presumably a person of considerable age and experience; if he is to be that, what becomes of all his graceful accomplishments in riding, playing tennis, singing to a lute, and the rest, which are normally best performed by a young man? The group, and perhaps Castiglione as well, never quite come to terms with the fact that they are really talking about two different ideals here, one courtly

and the other humanistic, one active and the other contemplative. Trying to combine the two merely brings us up against the old paradox: "si la jeunesse savait, si la vieillesse pouvait."

There is a prevailing sentiment in this fourth book that the courtier is there to know and see the truth, and tell the truth to the prince; that he is to instil the principles of virtue, little by little, into the prince's mind; that he is to promote justice and *vergogna* wherever he can. *Vergogna* combines the ideas of a sense of honor, of reference for the fitness of things, and of guilt if honor is betrayed: it is an almost perfect translation of the Homeric term *aidos*, and like it expresses something very central in the heroic code. Half a century after his death, Castiglione's book was banned by the Inquisition and placed on the Index: this of course was silly, and reflects a time when the Catholic Church was frightened by everything. But it is true that the heroic code underlying the ideal of the courtier is committed to the world and the world's educational values. Castiglione's code has much in common, not only with the Classical heroic code, but with similar codes across the world, like the samurai code in Japan. Every aristocracy contains within it a tendency to make an autonomous religion out of its social status. A strong attraction in W.B. Yeats toward this element in Japanese culture is combined with an equally strong admiration for Castiglione.

There are objections by some in the group to this new programme for the courtier: is he to become simply a schoolmaster, and even if he were to succeed in his aim of educating the prince, would he not make him a mere justice of the peace rather than a great monarch? Ottaviano Fregoso stresses the extroverted and historical side of a ruler's greatness, his glory and wealth and splendid buildings, as against the philosophical and contemplative. But there is also a feeling that the pattern of what is being talked about derives from Aristotle's relation to Alexander and Plato's to Dionysius, and whatever has Aristotle and Plato for its exemplars can hardly be an ignoble ideal. But the tone of melancholy that recurs throughout the book is very marked here. It is generally agreed that monarchy is the best form of government because it is the most "natural," and because God is thought of as a sovereign monarch, and it is also urged that some promising young men, Francis I in France, Henry VIII in England, will make very good princes. But we get glimpses of futility, of a sense that the courtier is to make these great cultural efforts merely to help a prince who probably won't listen — and, according to Machiavelli, shouldn't listen, except for reasons of publicity.

In the third book we ran into an impasse: the courtier should be a

lover, but religion and society will only tolerate marriage. In the fourth book we find a contrasting impasse: the courtier is to inform the prince's mind with justice and virtue, and yet, as Machiavelli demonstrates, ethical scruples merely hamper and inhibit a prince. His subjects are half men and half vicious animals, and the prince must not forget the animal qualities, the lion's courage and the fox's cunning, if he is to remain a prince. Castiglione does not admit this kind of argument, but he has lived through the same age as Machiavelli and has seen much the same kind of history. The hopelessness of the prospect of the prince's will and the courtier's wisdom forming a unity remains in the background, however justified the efforts towards such a union may be.

The book concludes with Bembo's panegyric on love, which has the function of suggesting that the courtier's training does have a goal which is of value in itself, and leads far beyond his duty as the prince's adviser. Bembo climbs the Neoplatonic ladder of love, postulating three levels in man, with an impelling power attached to each. These are sense and appetite; reason and choice; intellect and will. By will is meant the emancipated and purified will that, in a more religious context, Virgil leaves Dante with near the end of the *Purgatorio*. It is a power, Bembo says, of conversing with angels. Each level is a form of what Plato calls Eros, and in the course of climbing the ladder Eros discovers his identity with beauty. Beauty is of divine origin, and has goodness for its centre, which means that we have first of all to pass through the tiresome argument that all beautiful people are good, except those who regrettably are not. The lover begins in the physical world of sense, admiring beautiful bodies; the soul in him then awakens and sees the form of beauty within bodies, and finally, as reason gives way to intellect or universal reason, beautiful forms become the universal form of beauty and love passes from the contemplation of it to union with it. Pallavicino puts up his customary protest against including women in so high an ideal, but is silenced for the moment with a reference to the role of Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*. A far more effective and beautiful answer is the final vision of the dawn breaking outside the windows as the courtiers have talked through the night, with all the stars scattered except for Venus, the focus of all beauty, who guards the confines of night and day.

Bembo's vision reflects the Platonism of Ficino, but is not confined to its age: the Eros ladder has been climbed many times since, its last major appearance in our culture being, perhaps, Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*. Similarly, Machiavelli's conception of the prince belongs to a tradition of absolutizing the will

that reaches its culmination in Nietzsche. But the real "relevance" of such books to our own time rests on a different basis. In the course of time, prince and courtier become metaphors for elements that are in all of us. Each of us, that is, has a prince and a courtier within himself, a principle of will and a principle of "grace" which in the last analysis turns out to be love. (The love, we said, is that of Eros, not the Christian Agape, but Agape by definition is a "grace" that does not come from man, and there are no rules for educating it.) The will is developed by our vision of society and of our place in that society; grace and love come from our vision of culture. The life of will is the life of work; the life of grace and love is the life of leisure, of play, of the "games" of which Castiglione's dialogue is one. In Castiglione's day the courtier was the servant of the prince; in our day the life of leisure is subordinate to the life of work. But we are slowly coming around to think that perhaps the life of leisure is the real life, and that play is that for the sake of which work is done. Similarly, no one in Castiglione's book questions the social superiority of the prince, yet in Bembo's vision we are carried up to a world which has left all princes behind, and far below.

Such a conception of leisure cannot, of course, remain associated with an elite and privileged minority, but has to spread through the whole of society. In the French Revolution the revolutionary ideals of modern man were defined as liberty, equality, and fraternity. The first two have been vigorously pursued in different parts of the world: they are both impersonal, and depend on mass movements. The third, fraternity, has been practically ignored as an ideal: it is the ideal of personal respect, and is infinitely more difficult to maintain and promote than the others. But it must become increasingly the chief preoccupation of our time, and as it does so, the kind of educational ideal associated with it will come more clearly into focus. Castiglione is one of the very few educators who have grasped the importance of this ideal, and that is why his book is not only a beautiful handbook of grace but a profound vision of human destiny.

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Il testo teatrale e la questione del doppio destinatario: l'esempio della *Calandria*

I

Argomento di questo studio è il carattere specifico del testo teatrale: voglio dire ciò che distingue il testo teatrale da un altro testo qualunque e in ispecie dal testo narrativo. Molti hanno scritto da varie parti e con varia intenzione, su questo argomento, soprattutto, ma non soltanto, negli ultimi dieci o quindici anni.¹ Io mi fermerò in particolare sulla tecnica del doppio, o addirittura plurimo, destinatario, che è stata assunta a simbolo della teatralità, tanto che in nome di essa si è potuto parlare della teatralità di un'opera narrativa — del "Decameron come teatro."² E concentrerò la mia analisi su un esempio, quello della *Calandria* del Bibbiena.³ La scelta di un esempio unico dipende dalla mia convinzione che soltanto un'analisi sufficientemente approfondita di un testo teatrale può avere qualche speranza di avvicinarsi alla sua specificità. Naturalmente io credo che quel che dirò della *Calandria*, se valido, dovrebbe poter essere esteso ad altre opere teatrali — ma non direi necessariamente a tutte, pensando, per esempio, al teatro d'avanguardia contemporaneo, o alla commedia elegiaca del medioevo — al "teatro dei secoli senza teatro," per servirmi dell'espressione adoperata da Giorgio Padoan.⁴ La mia ipotesi è che la mia analisi e le mie conclusioni si possano estendere a tutto quello che potremmo chiamare, e sia pure in modo approssimativo, il teatro tradizionale. La scelta, poi, della *Calandria*, in particolare, dipende dal fatto che questa commedia costituisce, almeno a mio avviso, un caso quasi paradigmatico dell'uso della tecnica del doppio destinatario: e cioè l'esempio di un'utilizzazione particolarmente intensa e riuscita del giuoco fra i vari destinatari e le varie prospettive dalle quali questi considerano gli avvenimenti.

Durante tutto lo svolgimento della commedia nessuno dei personaggi riesce a capire *interamente* quel che sta accadendo: soltanto il pubblico è al corrente di tutta la verità. In alcune scene, il dialogo sembra ridursi a dei frammenti di monologhi divergenti, e l'azione dei vari personaggi — i loro piani, i loro complotti, le loro astuzie — svolgersi al buio, quasi ad occhi chiusi, procedendo in una direzione del tutto insospettata, nota soltanto al pubblico, olimpicamente divertito e onnisciente. Nella seconda scena del secondo atto, la serva Samia, scambiando Lidio femmina (e cioè Santilla travestita da uomo) per Lidio maschio, insiste perché vada a trovare di nuovo la padrona Fulvia, innamorata di quest'ultimo, e non può capire la reazione del suo interlocutore, o piuttosto interlocutrice, la quale a sua volta non sa e non riesce a capire di che cosa Samia stia parlando. Nelle due scene seguenti, Ruffo, lo pseudo-negromante, Lidio femmina e il suo servo Fannio tramano un inganno ai danni di Fulvia, approfittando della sua credulità, e cioè della sua fiducia nei poteri magici di Ruffo, che grazie ad un suo spirito familiare (o "favellario,"⁵ come lo chiama Samia storpiando la parola) fa e disfà ciò che vuole. Ora, Ruffo non sa che il Lidio a cui si rivolge è una femmina travestita da maschio; e Lidio femmina e Fannio non sanno niente della vera ragione della passione di Fulvia. Tutto ciò è, invece, noto agli spettatori. Nell'ultima scena del quarto atto e nelle prime due del quinto, Samia e perfino Fessenio (il *furbo* della commedia) sono portati a credere che Lidio maschio sia stato effettivamente trasformato in femmina, per opera del solito spirito "favellario" e dello pseudo-negromante. E così via. Sarebbe difficile trovare una scena che non presupponga un diverso livello di informazione fra personaggi e spettatori.

Com'è noto, il Bibbiena prese lo spunto della sua commedia dai *Menaechmi* di Plauto.⁶ Egli però sostituì (nel contesto socio-ideologico di un'esaltazione dell'amore con forti sottintesi omosessuali, abilmente indicati fin dall'inizio)⁷ ai due gemelli maschi della commedia plautina un maschio e una femmina: Lidio e Santilla, tanto simili "di volto, di persona, di parlare," che "talor vestendosi Lidio da fanciulla e Santilla da maschio, non pur li forestieri, ma non essa madre, non la propria nutrice sapea discernere qual fusse Lidio o qual fusse Santilla" (I.1). Intorno a ciascuno dei gemelli si formano due gruppi di personaggi, simmetricamente atteggiati, che si dividono in due la conoscenza della verità. Fessenio, Fulvia, Samia, conoscono la vicenda di Lidio maschio; Fannio e Tiresia (la nutrice, che appare sulla scena, ma non parla)⁸ conoscono quella di Santilla, e cioè — come è più frequentemente detto nel testo, quasi

a sottolineare la simmetria — di "Lidio femina." Lo svolgimento della commedia porta ciascuno di questi due gruppi a incontrarsi e a conoscere così l'altra metà della verità: ma ciò accade alla fine. Per quanto poi riguarda Calandro e Ruffo — anch'essi simmetricamente collocati, l'uno dalla parte di Lidio maschio, l'altro dalla parte di Lidio femmina — essi non conoscono e non vengono mai a conoscere né l'una né l'altra parte della verità, e si agitano, all'oscuro di tutto, dal principio alla fine. Calandro non sa che Lidio maschio è maschio, lo crede femmina e s'innamora di lui. Ruffo non sa che Lidio femmina è femmina, crede che sia maschio e pensa di potersene servire per convalidare la sua fama di negromante. Entrambi si credono furbi e sono le vittime delle beffe degli altri personaggi. Calandro è lo sciocco per antonomasia, oggetto di trastullo, di riso e di scherno da parte di tutti. E nel momento in cui sembrerebbe che dovesse inevitabilmente scoprire la verità, la sostituzione di una bruttissima meretrice (II.9, p.58, "vezzosa porca," III.1, p.60, "scanfarda" è detta da Fessenio; v. anche III.3, p.66, dove Calandro stesso dice che è brutta) a Lidio maschio, fa sì che egli si confermi nell'errore e nel suo entusiasmo erotico:

Col mal anno, lassa che mi corrucci io, non tu, dispettosa! che m'hai cavato dal paradiso mondano e toltermi ogni mio sollazzo. Fastidiosa! [Egli dice rivolgendosi alla moglie Fulvia e parlando della sua grande avventura.] Tu non vali le scarpette vecchie sue, che la mi fa più carezze e meglio mi bacia che tu non fai. Ella mi piace più che la zuppa del vin dolce; e luce più che la stella Diana; e ha più magnificenza che la Quintadecima; e è più astuta che la fata Morgana. (III.13, p.79)

Ruffo, dal canto suo, finisce per credere che Lidio femmina, da lui ritenuto maschio, sia ermafrodito, o come egli dice storpiando la parola adoperata da Fannio, "merdafiorito," o "barbaflorito" (III.17, pp. 87,88).

La situazione si può riassumere schematicamente così:

sulla scena	A) Calandro	Ruffo	V^0
	B) Lidio maschio Fessenio Fulvia Samia	Lidio femmina Fannio Tiresia	$v^1/v^2 = 1/2V$
fuori scena	C)	spettatori	$v^1 + v^2 = V$

Ho lasciato da parte alcuni personaggi del tutto marginali che appaiono sulla scena soltanto una volta: gli sbirri, il facchino e la meretrice, pure e semplici pedine del gioco scenico, e Polinico, il pedante, che serve da pretesto per richiamare l'attenzione sullo sfondo socio-ideologico della commedia, sopra accennato. A Calandro e a Ruffo, isolati dalla loro stessa sciocchezza e confinati senza rimedio al grado zero di conoscenza della Verità, seguono i due gruppi di personaggi che ne conoscono due metà diverse (indicate con v^1 e v^2), e a questi, fuori della scena, gli spettatori. Le due frecce tratteggiate indicano che, attraverso lo svolgimento dell'azione, ciascuno dei due gruppi a verità dimidiata viene a conoscere l'altra metà del vero e viene a trovarsi, quindi, *ma soltanto alla fine della commedia*, nella stessa situazione degli spettatori. Questi ultimi, se si tien conto dell'*argomento* recitato da un attore, dopo il prologo, all'inizio dello spettacolo, conoscono nei suoi elementi fondamentali la verità, prima ancora che la commedia cominci. E se poi non si vuol tener conto dell'*argomento* (che pure ha in ciò la sua ragion d'essere), vengono ben presto messi al corrente della situazione, direttamente, attraverso il monologo di Fessenio, col quale si apre il primo atto, e, indirettamente, attraverso quello di Ruffo, col quale si chiude il primo atto. Scene, personaggi e l'azione stessa della commedia (l'intreccio, il suo sviluppo, la sua conclusione) sono resi possibili dal duplice sfruttamento della tecnica del doppio destinatario — fra personaggi a grado zero di conoscenza della verità e personaggi a verità dimidiata, e fra questi ultimi e il pubblico — e dalla condizione che uno dei destinatari ne sappia più dell'altro (o degli altri, com'è appunto il caso degli spettatori). Sembra quasi che la commedia non sia altro che l'illustrazione, la messa in scena di questa tecnica.

III

E tuttavia, nemmeno questa commedia, che si può considerare appunto paradigmatica e il cui successo teatrale è ovviamente affidato all'uso estremo, quasi parossistico, della tecnica in questione, riesce senz'altro a persuaderci che in tale tecnica vada ricercato il segreto, il carattere specifico, di un testo teatrale. L'intreccio della *Calandria* rientra nel tema, che ha avuto tanta fortuna nel teatro, degli scambi di persona:⁹ un tema che si presta in modo particolare al gioco del doppio destinatario. Ma evidentemente non è questo il tema della maggior parte delle opere teatrali. E d'altro canto, non sarebbe difficile trovare, nelle parti dialogiche e nei discorsi inseriti in opere narrative, esempi di una brillante utilizzazione

del doppio destinatario e del diverso livello d'informazione, o almeno del diverso punto di vista e del diverso contesto, che distinguono l'un destinatario dall'altro.

Basta pensare a certe novelle del *Decameron*. Tutti ricordano certamente la famosa predica di frate Cipolla, nella quale grazie alle acrobazie linguistiche dell'oratore i luoghi e gli avvenimenti più comuni vengono fatti passare per cose meravigliose, del tutto fuor dell'ordinario: VI.10.37,¹⁰ "quelle parti dove apparisce il sole"; VI.10.38, "di Vinegia partendomi e andandomene per lo Borgo de' Greci e di quindi per lo reame del Garbo cavalcando e per Baldacca, pervenni in Sardigna"; VI.10.41, "alle montagne de' baschi pervenni, dove tutte l'acque corrono alla 'ngiù'; "dove io vi giuro, per lo abito che io porto addosso che i' vidi volare i pennati, cosa incredibile a chi non gli avesse veduti"; ecc. Mentre le cose più incredibili vengono date per certe, come, per esempio, la lista delle reliquie possedute dal "venerabile padre messer Nonmiblasmete Sevoipiace, degnissimo patriarca di Jerusalemme": VI.10.45, "il dito dello spirito santo così intero e saldo come fu mai, e il ciuffetto del serafino che apparve a San Francesco, e una dell'unghie de' Gherubini, e una delle coste del Verbum-caro fatti-alle-finestre, e de' vestimenti della Santa Fé cattolica, e alquanti de' raggi della stessa che apparve a' tre Magi in oriente," e così via (c'era anche "uno de' denti della Santa Croce, e in una ampolla alquanto del suono delle campane del tempio di Salamone," VI.10.46). Giuocando così, nell'un caso e nell'altro, sul duplice destinatario del discorso: "la stolta moltitudine" dei Certaldesi, con la loro credulità, da una parte, e dall'altra, i suoi amici beffardi, presenti anch'essi alla predica, nonché l'incredulo e divertito lettore.

Quest'ultimo è ovviamente, anche se implicitamente, coinvolto, nelle risposte dell'abbate a Ferondo, al quale quegli ("che la moglie di lui si gode," "santissimo," com'è, "fuori che nell'opera delle donne," III.8.4) fa credere di essere in purgatorio:

Disse Ferondo: "Non c'è egli più persona che noi due?"

Disse il monaco: "Sì, a migliaia, ma tu non gli puoi né vedere né udire se non come essi te."

Disse allora Ferondo: "O quanto siam noi di lungi dalle nostre contrade?"

"Ohioh!" disse il monaco "sèvi di lungi delle miglia più di ben la cacheremo."

"Gnaffé! cotesto è bene assai!" disse Ferondo "e per quello che mi paia, noi dovremmo essere fuor del mondo tanto ci ha." (III.8.60-63)

E similmente è soprattutto il lettore l'*altro* destinatario del colloquio, in VIII.3, fra Maso del Saggio e Calandrino circa la favolosa

contrada di Bengodi (v. in particolare, VIII.3.12-17 — la presenza di un compagno di Maso il quale presumibilmente assiste, consapevole della beffa, al colloquio, non ha molto rilievo). Esclusivamente al lettore sono rivolti, in VIII.9, i sottintesi ironici, le allusioni burlesche ed oscene, le invenzioni verbali e le parole comicamente storpiate del colloquio in cui Bruno descrive a maestro Simone le meraviglie dell'*andare in corso*:

Voi vedreste quivi la donna de' barbanicchi, la reina de' baschi, la moglie del soldano, la 'mperadrice d'Osbech, la ciancianfera di Norueca, la semistante di Berlinzone e la scalpedra di Narsia. (VIII.9.23)

"Stanotte fu' io alla brigata: e essendomi un poco la reina d'Inghilterra rincresciuta, mi feci venir la gumedra del gran can d'Altarisi."

Diceva il maestro: "Che vuol dir gumedra? io non gl'intendo questi nomi."

"O maestro mio," diceva Bruno "io non me ne maraviglio, ché io ho bene udito dire che Porcograsso e Vannaccena non ne dicon nulla."

Disse il maestro: "Tu vuoi dire Ipocrasso e Avicena." (VIII.9.35-38)

Per non dire degli elogi ambigui fatti a maestro Simone (VIII.9.15, "l'amor che io porto alla vostra qualitativa mellonaggine da Legnaia," VIII.9.47, "Per certo con voi perderieno le cetere de' sagginali, si artagoticamente stracantate," ecc.) e del seguito della novella, quando a Bruno si aggiunge Buffalmacco e insieme conducono il maestro alla grande avventura con "la contessa di Civillari, la quale era la più bella cosa che si trovasse in tutto il culattario dell'umana generazione" (VIII.9.73).

Sono questi gli esempi più ovvi. Ma non son certamente tutti. Il Boccaccio, a volte, ricorre ad un giuoco simile anche nelle parti più semplicemente narrative, quasi proiettando, per virtù del suo illusionismo verbale, accanto al lettore pronto a cogliere il significato delle sue parole, l'immagine di un lettore comicamente stordito, in ritardo: come, per esempio, nel racconto del corteggiamento della Nuta da parte di Guccio Imbratta:

...ancora che d'agosto fosse, postosi presso al fuoco a sedere, cominciò con costei, che Nuta aveva nome, a entrare in parlare e dirle che egli era gentile uomo per procuratore e che egli aveva de' fiorini più di millantanove, senza quegli che egli aveva a dare altri, che erano anzi più che meno, e che egli sapeva tante cose fare e dire, che domine pure unquanche. (VI.10.22)¹²

E se, in questo caso, è possibile pensare che il discorso indiretto si limiti a trascrivere le parole del servo,¹² ciò non è possibile nel caso della presentazione di Ciappelletto:

Era questo Ciappelletto di questa vita: egli, essendo notaio, aveva grandissima vergogna quando uno de' suoi strumenti, come che pochi ne facesse, fosse altro che falso trovato; de' quali tanti avrebbe fatti di quanti fosse stato richiesto, e quelli più volentieri in dono che alcuno altro grandemente salariato. (I.1.10, ma v. anche oltre; corsivo mio)

IV

Vero è che, come ho accennato al principio, proprio per gli esempi ora citati e per l'uso della tecnica del doppio destinatario da parte del Boccaccio, si è parlato di teatralità del *Decameron*. E lo stesso si potrebbe dire di altre opere narrative che presentino caratteristiche analoghe. Si potrebbe così rovesciare l'argomento. Ma ciò presupporrebbe di aver già dimostrato che quella tecnica, o almeno la sua utilizzazione in modo particolarmente efficace, costituisce una caratteristica specifica del teatro, essenziale alle implicazioni del testo teatrale e talmente importante e decisiva da trasformare, con la sua presenza, la narrativa in teatro, o almeno in qualcosa di molto simile al teatro.¹³

Ritorniamo, dunque, al testo della *Calandria*, per una rapida verifica delle sue implicazioni sceniche e l'importanza che ha, da questo punto di vista, la tecnica del doppio destinatario. È facile rendersi conto immediatamente come monologhi e dialoghi siano pieni di didascalie dissimulate. Ma è altrettanto ovvio che tali didascalie nascoste — come anche quelle vere e proprie, assenti nelle commedie del Cinquecento, ma presenti in altri testi teatrali — quanto più ampie e complete esse sono, tanto più tendono alla condizione della narratività, e cioè ad attribuire al testo una tendenziale auto-sufficienza e a ridurre l'importanza, la necessità della sua traduzione scenica. Per esempio, II.7 (p.50):

FULVIA. Samia!

SAMIA. Odila che di sopra mi chiama. Arà dalle finestre visto Lidio, ché là lo vedo parlare con non so chi. . . .

Oppure, II.6 (p.50):

FESSENIO. Or vo via sanza parlare altrimenti a Samia, che là sull'uscio veggio borbottare de sé.

O ancora, III.1 (p.60):

FESSENIO. Io son corso inanzi perché qua mi trovi la scanfarda [la meretrice predisposta per ingannare Calandro] che io ho ordinato per

questo conto. Et eccola che a me ne viene. E vedi anco là, col forzieri, el facchino [nel forziere è racchiuso Calandro].¹⁴

Le parole di Samia e di Fessenio costituiscono qui di per se stesse la scena, con un minimo di indeterminazione circa l'eventuale, ma non indispensabile, completamento scenico dell'avverbio di luogo: "là lo vedo," "là su l'uscio," "anco là." Il lettore viene, dunque, a trovarsi in una posizione analoga, o quasi analoga, a quella dello spettatore. E lo stesso si può dire di altri passi dove, alla *costruzione verbale* della scena, si aggiunge l'identificazione di alcuni personaggi. Cito da II.1 (p.34):

LIDIO F. E, dicendomi el nipote che Perillo vuol, doman o l'altro, io la sposi [allude all'impossibile matrimonio con la figlia di Perillo], per conferire la cosa con voi, mia nutrice, e teco, Fannio mio servo, fuora di casa me ne sono venuta. E piena di tanto travaglio quanto io ben sento e voi pensar potete. E non so se . . .

FANNIO. Taci, oimè! taci; a fin che costei [Samia], che afflitta verso noi viene, non attinga quel che parliamo.

L'identificazione del servo e della nutrice, più utile per lo spettatore che per il lettore, non cambia sostanzialmente la situazione. Il supplemento d'informazione non intacca l'autosufficienza della lettura e tende se mai a rendere indifferente la scelta fra lettura e rappresentazione.

L'orientamento deittico-performativo (per adoperare la terminologia di Alessandro Serpieri e dei suoi collaboratori)¹⁵ non è, dunque, sufficiente a garantire la specificità del testo teatrale, come crede il Serpieri.¹⁶ I riferimenti al "contesto pragmatico," ai luoghi, ai personaggi e ai loro movimenti ed atteggiamenti possono, infatti, sostituirsi alla scena ed agli attori, assicurando così al testo un coefficiente di leggibilità non inferiore al coefficiente di rappresentabilità. È soltanto là dove la deitticità e performatività del testo (o, come io ho detto, le didascalie nascoste o dissimulate)¹⁷ sottolineano la sua incompletezza, che l'esigenza imprescindibile di una sua integrazione scenica risulta evidente, e con essa il carattere specificamente teatrale del testo in questione. Eccone alcuni esempi ovvi. Cito dal battibecco fra Polinico, precettore di Lidio maschio, e Fessenio, in I.1 (p.15):

POLINICO. El fo per non usare altro che parole.

FESSENIO. E che potresti tu mai farmi in cen'anni?

POLINICO. El vederesti: così, così. [evidentemente fa il gesto di batterlo].

Altro esempio: tutto il dialogo in cui Fessenio spiega a Calandro come si deve procedere per farlo a pezzi, in modo che possa entrare nel forziere, in II.6 (p.47, p.49). Cito solo il principio e la fine:

CALANDRO. E dove si scommette l'omo?

FESSENIO. In tutti e' luoghi ove tu vedi svolgersi [cioè nelle giunture]: come qui, qui, qui, qui . . . Vuol sapere?

CALANDRO. Oh! oh! oh! oh! oh! oimè!

FESSENIO. Tu guasteresti il mondo. Oh che maladetta sia tanta smemorataggine e si poca pazienza! Ma potta del cielo, non ti dissi pure ora che tu non dovevi gridare? Hai guasto lo 'ncanto.

E similmente, la spiegazione di come Calandro deve fare per morire, sempre allo scopo di entrare nel famoso forziere, in II.9 (pp.56-57). Cito soltanto un passo:

FESSENIO. Torci la bocca; più ancora; torci bene; per l'altro verso; più basso. Oh! oh! Or muori a posta tua. Oh! Bene. Che cosa è a far con savii! Chi aria mai imparato a morir sì bene come ha fatto questo valente omo? El quale more di fuora eccellentemente. Se così bene di drento more, non sentirà cosa che io gli faccia; e cognoscerollo a questo. Zas! Bene. Zas! Benissimo. Zas! Optime. Calandro! oh, Calandro! Calandro!

CALANDRO. Io son morto, i' son morto.

O ancora, dal III.2 (p.63), le parole di Fessenio alla meretrice: "Piangi, lamentati, grida, scapigliati. Così, su!" In tutti questi casi soltanto la mimica dell'attore, necessario complemento del testo, può assicurare l'effetto comico.¹⁸

Ora, l'esigenza della traduzione scenica del testo si presenta con maggiore complessità e con maggiore interesse, dove si fa più evidente il giuoco fra i vari destinatari e i vari livelli d'informazione. In I.4 (p.24), Fessenio, fingendo di frantendere la domanda di Calandro, il quale vorrebbe sapere *come sta* la sua Santilla, risponde con una descrizione del modo *come essa stava*, e cioè dell'atteggiamento che essa avrebbe tenuto, mentre lui Fessenio le parlava di Calandro:

FESSENIO. Aaah, come la stava vuoi saper tu?

CALANDRO. Messer sì.

FESSENIO. Quando poco fa la vidi, ella stava . . . aspetta! a sedere con la mano al volto; e, parlando io di te, intenta ascoltandomi, teneva gli occhi e la bocca aperta, con un poco di quella sua linguetta fuora: così!

Anche qui la mimica dell' attore è ovviamente indispensabile a tradurre in atto l'effetto comico del testo. Ma un'ulteriore complicazione distingue questo da quelli precedentemente citati. La Santilla in questione, come è ben noto agli spettatori e a Fessenio, *ma non a Calandro*, è un uomo, Lidio maschio, travestito da donna. Questa ulteriore complicazione dovrebbe riflettersi nell'integrazione mimica del testo, raddoppiando così l'appello alla complicità del pubblico e l'effetto comico della scena.

Particolare rilievo acquistano anche le implicazioni sceniche degli avverbi e delle altre indicazioni di luogo, quando non si riferiscono ad un luogo qualunque realisticamente possibile, ma a quel luogo o a quei luoghi della scena ai quali si attribuisce il privilegio di rendere il personaggio invisibile agli altri personaggi — *ma non al pubblico*: "Voglio un poco starmi così da parte e udire quel che ragionano" (I.1, p.12); "Io, aspettando quel che avvenir di questo fatto deve, qua da parte mi ritirerò soletto" (V.4, p.124); e così via. Questa assurda divisione di un unico spazio in zone non-comunicanti, diversamente privilegiate — evidentemente connessa con la tecnica del doppio destinatario — può esser resa accettabile ed acquistare evidenza drammatica soltanto nell'esecuzione scenica del testo. Si tratta, nel caso della *Calandria*, di una divisione ampiamente utilizzata per *il movimento sulla scena* dei due gruppi di personaggi, come abbiamo detto, a verità dimidiata. In II.23, Lidio maschio e Lidio femmina, entrambi vestiti da donna, appaiono sulla scena insieme a Calandro, che corre dall'uno all'altra, senza saper decidere quale dei due sia la sua bella. In V.3, i due gemelli, entrambi vestiti da uomo, sono in scena insieme ai loro servi, Fessenio e Fannio: nel corso della scena Fessenio, inizialmente incerto quale sia il suo vero padrone, finisce per capire come stanno le cose (dopo che Lidio maschio si è allontanato per andare a trovare la sua amante, Fulvia). Ma tanto nell'una quanto nell'altra scena, i due gemelli non s'incontrano, non si parlano e rimangono come invisibili l'uno all'altro. Queste due scene, non essenziali all'intreccio, mancano di ogni evidenza alla semplice lettura. Soltanto la messa in scena può dare rilievo alla comicità, all'accelerazione crescente degli equivoci e dei travestimenti, che si conclude con l'incontro delle due parti e col mutuo riconoscimento; e infine al

giuoco velocissimo e complicatissimo (solo faticosamente comprensibile alla lettura) degli scambi di vestiti, attraverso cui i due padroni e il servo Fannio, sotto la calcolata regia del servo Fessenio, riescono a venire in possesso dei panni che loro convengono, quasi a celebrare, a riconoscimento già avvenuto, il trionfo estremo del puro ritmo comico — un episodio solo superficialmente motivato dalla notizia che i fratelli di Calandro (di cui non si è mai parlato prima) hanno trovato (come? quando?) Lidio con Fulvia “e mandato per Calandro e li fratelli di lei che venghino a casa per svergognarla” (V.4, p.122).

Ma che conclusione si può trarre da tutto questo? Si può forse concludere che è la tecnica del doppio destinatario a richiedere di per se stessa l'integrazione della rappresentazione scenica? O non piuttosto il particolare uso che vien fatto di essa, nella *Calandria* o in altre opere teatrali? Se si ripercorre mentalmente la serie degli esempi ora citati (si tratta di scene superflue per l'intreccio e per l'impostazione fondamentale della commedia e del giuoco dei vari destinatari), la sola conclusione che si può ricavare è proprio quest'ultima. E cioè che il Bibbiena ha utilizzato quella tecnica in modo da sfruttare al massimo tutte le possibilità offerte dall'integrazione scenica: mimica dell'attore, luogo scenico e sua divisione in zone non-comunicanti, immediatezza dell'evidenza visiva, ecc. Le eventuali implicazioni sceniche della tecnica del doppio destinatario non giustificano, quindi, l'assunzione di questa tecnica a segno, o simbolo, della teatralità. Anche lasciando da parte l'esempio di Boccaccio e altri esempi possibili — si pensi all'episodio dell'arresto di Renzo (*Promessi sposi*, cap. XV), dove le voci del notaio, di Renzo e della folla e gli stessi interventi del narratore creano una molteplicità di prospettive e di destinatari, fra cui evidentemente il lettore, o il lettore-spettatore, se si vuole continuare con le metafore — ; anche, dunque, lasciando da parte il vario modo in cui il giuoco del doppio destinatario si può realizzare al di fuori del teatro, proprio l'analisi della *Calandria*, mostra che, analogamente a quanto ho fatto osservare a proposito dell'orientamento deittico-performativo, la caratteristica specifica del testo teatrale non è già in quella tecnica, ma nell'integrazione scenica che il testo, ed eventualmente l'uso fatto in esso di quella tecnica, richiedono. *La specificità del testo teatrale sta, dunque, nella sua insufficienza, nella sua incompletezza, nella sua tendenziale eteronomia.*

Mi si permettano, a chiarimento di quanto ho detto, alcune considerazioni.

1 Il mio tentativo di mettere in evidenza l'incompletezza del testo teatrale può far pensare che tale incompletezza e la necessità dell'integrazione scenica, soprattutto l'appello al giuoco mimico dell'attore, siano inevitabilmente connessi con l'aspetto più ovviamente farsesco del teatro. L'esempio della *Calandria* può essere in questo caso fuorviante. Ma dovrebbe esser chiaro che l'integrazione scenica e l'esigenza di essa possono configurarsi in modi molto diversi. Certo, se è vero in generale che *totus mundus agit histrionem*, ciò è vero in modo eminente del teatro e degli attori: "...ora forse indovino anche — dice il Padre nei *Sei personaggi* — perchè il nostro autore, che ci vide vivi così, non volle poi comporci per la scena." Ma, con buona pace di Pirandello, non c'è motivo di credere che l'istrionismo degli attori abbia possibilità di variazione più limitate dell'istrionismo del mondo: "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral; pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical; tragical-comical-historical-pastoral. . . *Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light*" *Hamlet* II.2), per citare l'inevitabile Shakespeare.

2 Oltre che delle variazioni qualitative bisogna tener conto delle variazioni quantitative. Il grado d'incompletezza del testo teatrale varia da una scena all'altra e da un'opera all'altra. Tutta la letteratura drammatica si colloca fra due estremi opposti: ad un estremo, il poema drammatico, come ad esempio il *Carmagnola* o l' *Adelchi* di Manzoni, all'altro estremo gli scenari della commedia dell'arte. Soltanto nella misura in cui ci si avvicina al primo, al polo dell'autonomia, un testo teatrale si può leggere come un qualsiasi altro testo, come, per esempio, un testo narrativo. Ma ciò non vuol dire che quanto più alto è il grado di incompletezza, tanto più grande si debba considerare il valore intrinseco di un dramma o di una scena. La tendenziale eteronomia del testo teatrale costituisce soltanto il carattere specifico di esso, ciò che lo distingue da altri testi e in primo luogo dal testo narrativo; e non già l'unico punto di vista da cui ci si possa collocare — tanto meno poi un criterio di valutazione, o addirittura l'unico criterio di valutazione. La realtà storica dei generi letterari è un fatto innegabile, ma non certamente il modello assiologico della critica.

3 Il corollario critico che si può ricavare dall'eteronomia del testo teatrale è di tipo ermeneutico e non assiologico. Esso consiste nell'invito a individuare nel testo i luoghi della sua incompletezza, quelli dove soltanto l'integrazione scenica può rendere giustizia al

testo, realizzando la sua potenzialità, conferendogli tutta la sua efficacia, tutto il suo significato. Non si tratta della costatazione generica, apparentemente ovvia, ma in realtà complessa per le sue implicazioni, che un'opera teatrale è scritta per il teatro, ma di un'analisi puntuale. Se al critico di un'opera narrativa è lecito ricordare che situazioni, personaggi, passioni, ecc. esauriscono tutta la loro realtà nella pagina scritta, al critico dell'opera teatrale è necessario ricordare che ciò non è vero, o non è sempre vero nel suo caso. Il che non vuol dire che il critico debba completare il testo, sostituendosi così al regista e agli attori, o trasformarsi necessariamente da critico del testo teatrale in critico dello spettacolo teatrale. L'ufficio del critico del testo teatrale è per definizione vincolato al testo. Ma l'aderenza al testo assume un significato diverso nel caso del testo teatrale, da quello che ha nel caso del testo narrativo. E se in quest'ultimo caso si risolve in un richiamo alla intrinseca completezza ed autonomia del testo, nell'altro, nel caso dell'opera teatrale, implica di necessità l'attenzione alla specificità di quel testo, alla sua tendenziale eteronomia.

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NOTE

I V., per esempio: O. Zich, *Estetika dramaticeského umění* (Estetica dell'arte drammatica, Praha, 1931); J. Mukářovský, "Pokus o strukturní rozbor hereckého zjevu" (Tentativo di analisi strutturale del fenomeno dell'attore), 1931, ora in *Studia z estetiky* (Praha, 1966; trad. it. in J. Mukářovský, *Il significato dell'estetica*, Torino, 1973); P. Bogatyrev, *Znaky divadelní* (I segni del teatro), *Slovo a Slovesnot*, 4 (1938), 138-149, ora in *Poétique*, 8 (1971), 517-530; E. Souriau, *Les 200,000 situations dramatiques* (Paris, 1950); T. Kowzan, "Le signe au théâtre," *Diogène*, 61 (1968), 59-90; M. Pagnini, "Per una semiologia del teatro classico," *Strumenti critici*, 4 (1970), 121-140; G. Folena, Presentazione del volume *Lingua e strutture del teatro italiano del Rinascimento* (Padova, 1970), pp. ix-xix; P. M. Levitt, *A Structural Approach to the Analysis of Drama* (The Hague, 1971); P. Hamon, "Pour un statut sémiologique du personnage," *Littérature*, 6 (1972), 86-110; R. Larthomas, *Le langage dramatique* (Paris, 1972); F. Ruffini, "Semiotica del teatro: Ricognizione degli studi," *Biblioteca teatrale*, N.9 (1974), pp. 24-81; C. Segre, "La funzione del linguaggio nell'*Acte sans paroles* di Samuel Beckett," *Le strutture e il tempo* (Torino, 1974); R. Durand, "Problèmes de l'analyse structurale et sémiotique de la forme théâtrale," *Sémiologie de la représentation*, a cura di A. Helbo (Bruxelles, 1975); T. Kowzan, *Littérature et spectacle* (The Hague, 1975); J. L. Stylian, *Drama, Stage and Audience* (London, 1975); G. Nencioni, "Parlato-parlato, parlato-scritto, parlato-recitato," *Strumenti critici*, 10 (1976), 1-56; P. Pavis, *Problèmes de sémiologie théâtrale* (Montréal, 1976); R. Horny, *Script into Performance: A Structuralist view of Play Production* (Austin, 1977); F. Ruffini, *Semiotica del testo: L'esempio teatro* (Roma, 1978); il Numero 20 di *Biblioteca teatrale* dedicato a "Dramma/spettacolo, studi sulla semiologia del teatro" e il volume di saggi di A. Canziani, K. Elam, R. Guiducci, P. Gulli-Pugliatti, T. Kemeny, M. Pagnini, R. Rutelli, A. Serpieri, intitolato *Come si comunica il teatro: Dal testo alla scena* (Milano, 1978).

- 2 N. Borsellino, "Decameron come teatro," *Rozzi e Intronati*, 2 ediz. accresciuta (Roma, 1976), pp.12-50.
- 3 Per le citazioni dalla *Calandria*, mi sono servita dell'edizione a cura di G. Padoan (Bibbiena, 1970).
- 4 G. Padoan, "Il senso del teatro nei secoli senza teatro," *Concetto, storia, miti e immagini del Medio Evo*, a cura di V. Branca (Firenze, 1973), pp.325-338.
- 5 1.6, p.28
- 6 V., per esempio: B. Croce, "La 'commedia' del Rinascimento," *Poesia popolare e poesia d'arte*, 1933 (Bari, 1957), p.242; G. Padoan, ed., *Calandria* (Bibbiena, 1970), P.158; P. Fossati, Nota introduttiva alla *Calandria*, *Il teatro italiano*, a cura di G. Davico Bonino, parte II, tomo I (Torino, 1977), p.4; ecc.
- 7 Si veda II.2 e, in particolare, pp.19-20.
- 8 Si veda II.1-3, pp.34-38.
- 9 Degli scambi di persona nel teatro si è occupato G. Ferroni in una sua Comunicazione al VI Convegno interuniversitario tenuto a Bressanone, 8-10 luglio, 1978, "Tecniche del raddoppiamento nel teatro del Cinquecento," di prossima pubblicazione negli Atti del convegno. Più recentemente il doppio teatrale è stato argomento di una delle sezioni del Convegno di Studi tenuto all'Università della Calabria, 13-16 settembre, 1979. Per un'interpretazione particolare, suggestiva anche se discutibile, di questo stesso tema nella *Calandria*, v. "La *Calandria* o il mito di Androgine," *Struttura e ideologia nel teatro italiano fra '500 e '900* (Torino, 1978), pp.9-32.
- 10 Per le citazioni dal *Decameron*, mi sono servita dell'edizione a cura di V. Branca (Milano, 1976).
- 11 Ma si veda anche la descrizione della reazione di frate Cipolla, quando si accorge della beffa: "La quale come piena di carboni vide, non sospicò che ciò Guccio Balena gli avesse fatto, per ciò che nol conosceva da tanto, né il maladisso del male aver guardato che altri ciò non facesse, ma bestemmiò tacitamente sé, che a lui la guardia delle sue cose aveva commessa, conoscendol, come faceva, negligente, disubidente, trascutato e smemorato" (VI.10.35). La serie di aggettivi, "negligente, disubidente, trascutato e smemorato," riprende per il divertimento del lettore, parole e ritmo della presentazione che frate Cipolla era solito fare del suo servo (VI.10.17), quasi che il Boccaccio intervenisse a questo punto, interrompendo la narrazione, per rivolgersi direttamente al lettore, facendo il verso al frate.
- 12 Ma si veda ciò che dice in proposito il Borsellino. Sottolineando le espressioni "per procuratore," "più di millantanove senza quegli che egli aveva a dare altri, che erano anzi più che meno," "che domine pure unquanche," egli osserva che "il discorso indiretto non trascrive le parole del servo; le commenta ironicamente o ne accentua la risonanza burlesca" ("Decameron come teatro," p.30).
- 13 E' questa, mi sembra, la tesi sostenuta con molta finezza dal Borsellino. Egli considera l'intervenire del doppio destinatario nella narrativa, e in particolare nel *Decameron* (pp.31,32), come un vero e proprio procedimento teatrale, che presuppone "un reale condizionamento scenico" (p.22) e la trasformazione del lettore in spettatore (o in "lettore-spettatore," p.33). Il racconto della beffa di Bruno e Buffalmacco ai danni di maestro Simone sarebbe "il testo scenicamente più elaborato del *Decameron*," e cioè l'esempio più riuscito di una teatralità portata "al limite del più audace effettismo" (p.33). Il Borsellino parla di "animazione spettacolare della battuta comica, ingiustificata narrativamente e non assimilabile per intero dall' interlocutore, cui in realtà non è diretta" (p.27), a proposito della novella di Ferondo; di "ambiguità" e di "sottintesa complicità col pubblico" per quella di Calandrino; di astuzie che trasmettono "fuori dal dialogo, agli spettatori invisibili della novella, nuovi pretesti per la derisione di Calandrino," come anche dei "grulli devoti" nella novella di frate Cipolla (p.28); di "parlato scenico equivoco che coinvolge continuamente il pubblico" (p.37), a proposito della novella di maestro Simone. Si veda anche L. Russo, *Lettture critiche del Decameron*, 1956 (Bari, 1970), pp.61-62; M. Baratto, *Realtà e stile*

nel *Decameron* (Vicenza, 1970), pp. 271, sgg.; G. Padoan, "Il senso del teatro nei secoli senza teatro," pp.335-336. Al Borsellino si ricollega direttamente lo studio di A. Stauble, "La brigata del *Decameron* come pubblico teatrale," *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 9 (1975-76), 103-117.

14 V. anche le battute conclusive di Fessenio alla fine di II,9 e di III,2.

15 Mi riferisco alla raccolta di studi intitolata *Come comunica il teatro: Dal testo alla scena*, citata sopra, n.1.

16 Si veda nella raccolta citata (pp.11-54) il saggio, "Ipotesi teorica di segmentazione del testo teatrale," pubblicato per la prima volta in *Strumenti critici*, N.32-33 (1977). La dimensione deittico-performativa, inscritta nel testo — come insiste a più riprese il Serpieri (pp.17, 20, 25, ecc.) —, dovrebbe costituire la base di una segmentazione, intesa a preparare il testo teatrale alla messinscena, mettendo in evidenza "la primaria virtualità scenica del testo scritto" (p.29). Questa ipotesi teorica è illustrata da una serie di esempi di segmentazione di testi, per lo più shakespeariani. Il Serpieri non distingue, però, i casi in cui (1) l'orientamento deittico-performativo tende a risolversi nell'esigenza dell'integrazione scenica, mettendo in evidenza l'incompletezza del testo, da quelli in cui, invece, (2) tende a sostituirsi all'integrazione scenica, assicurando la completezza del testo in se stesso, indipendentemente dalla rappresentazione. Il suo discorso rimane così ambiguo. La specificità del testo teatrale risulta evidente, infatti, soltanto nel primo caso. Nel secondo caso, niente vieta che deitticità e performatività si riscontrino in testi non teatrali. Criterio discriminante è, quindi, non la dimensione deittico-performativa, ma appunto l'incompletezza, che risulta da un uso particolare della deissi, come anche da ogni altro riferimento implicito e esplicito all'integrazione scenica.

17 Si veda ciò che è detto delle didascalie nel saggio, ora citato, del Serpieri (p.51, n.4). Particolarmente interessante è quel che egli osserva a proposito delle didascalie "troppo circostanziate," che sarebbero "segno di una *défaillance* teatrale." Analogo mi sembra il caso di un'articolazione deittico- performativa che tenda ad esaurirsi in se stessa. Non si dovrebbe, anche in questo caso, considerare l'iperdeterminazione come indizio di una scarsa teatralità del testo?

18 Da questo stesso punto di vista, si dovrebbe riprendere e sviluppare ulteriormente la breve ma acuta analisi, che G. Padoan fa del linguaggio teatrale della *Venexiana*, nell'introduzione alla sua edizione della commedia: *La Venexiana*, Testo critico, tradotto e annotato, a cura di G. Padoan (Padova, 1974), pp.9-10.

History and the Epic Discourse: Remarks on the Narrative Structure of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata**

Tasso's *Gerusalemme* was born under the sign of controversy. Tasso's adversaries have often asked, for instance, whether he really knew how to invent a story, how to connect one episode smoothly with another in order to create a sound and coherent narrative structure. The Florentine followers of the Accademia della Crusca fl— Leonardo Salviati, Bastiano de' Rossi and the young Galileo — did not think highly of Tasso's inventive ability.¹ It seemed to them that a low degree of inventiveness was compelling him to find elsewhere, out of himself, the supporting ground for the progress of his stories. In order to complicate the matter further, one should add the fact that while Tasso was able to defend his way of writing with skill and sophistication by mobilizing the whole rationale of his Aristotelian mind, his self-defeating poetic conscience would make secret deals with the point of view of his adversaries, leading his poem toward a version filled with compromises, called the *Gerusalemme Conquistata*.

The question I am asking myself in this essay can be formulated as follows: in which way can Tasso be considered for us an efficient and felicitous story teller? When we talk of "invention" we would perhaps be well advised to evaluate, as a recent Tasso reader, Gérard Génot, aptly suggests, "the functioning rather than the content of such a notion."² My hypothesis is in fact that since Tasso's imagination absorbs in the narrative flux of the octave recollections coming from the most diversified frontiers of poetry, it is possible to discuss narrative features of his poem by isolating, first, traces of eccentric support, and discussing then the tonal quality of the Tassesque absorption. By doing so we will be able to recover the intimate sense of Tasso's contribution to literature through a renewed attention to the signifier; to Tasso's word, understood, first, as a depository of preserved melodies and then as a point of departure for the conquest of a new rhythm, a new tone of poetic life.

It is my impression that the premise upon which the criticism of the Florentine academicians appears to be based should not be considered acceptable. A poet who was able to invent the story of Armida's pretended persecution by a non-existent uncle, as Tasso did, practically from scratch (G.L. IV,43-65)³ could not be accused without contradiction of lacking the gift of a strong imaginative drive. And even if a continuous appeal to external sources for support were proven true beyond the ascertained facts, it would still be difficult to deny Tasso creative power unless we were prepared to deny his capacity to articulate and shape events in a way which we are led to call uniquely Tassesque.

But how could we appropriately describe this "typical" way of Tasso's dealing with memorable texts, and his technique of absorbing their content into a narrative thread imbued with Tassesque flavor? Let us take the well known episode in Canto XII of the *Gerusalemme Liberata* which brings to light Clorinda's Christian origin through the clarifying confession of her servant and mentor Arsete. Clorinda, so Arsete's story goes, was born in the Christian land of Ethiopia of a Christian mother (to whom he attributes no name) and King Senapo (the name seems either to indicate an ebullient personality or the yellow and brown color of mustard, Tasso will change his name in the *Conquistata*, calling him by the more respectable appellative of David). Since Senapo and his wife are both black, it would have been expected that the girl born from their union would herself be black. But the newly born Clorinda has assumed through osmosis the white color of the beautiful girl painted on the ceiling of her mother's room, saved from a monster by the dutiful sword of St. George. It is therefore not surprising if the white girl is replaced with a black one, by a mother fearful for her reputation and anticipating the angry reaction of a suspicious husband. Clorinda is then confided unbaptized by a mother dying of despair to the supernal protection of St. George and to the earthly commitment of a pagan but faithful servant, the now old man Arsete.⁴ It is exactly a bewildered and overwhelmed Arsete who tells Clorinda of her origin and of the oneiric visits of St. George who keeps reminding him, with an angry voice, that Clorinda is still unbaptized and is fighting for the wrong cause.

All this happens on the eve of Clorinda's duel with Tancredi, during which she will die, not, however, without reestablishing a link through baptism with her mother's Christian faith. The one who will baptize the dying heroine will be the same Tancredi who loves her, but who has been unaware during the duel of her identity, since she had hidden her beauty under heavy black

armour. Now, it is well known to the Tasso critic that the one aspect of Arsete's story — the transformation of the girl's skin color through osmosis of color provoked by the intense participation of the expectant mother in a painted scene — comes directly from a late Greek model, Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*, a thick and adventurous novel written under the empire of Alexander Severus.⁵ This novel, in my opinion, much too easily dismissed by hasty and impatient critics, has moments of unequalled dramatic beauty. The unforgettable opening scene introduces the reader to signs of the apocalyptic disintegration of a once flourishing empire. Bandits from the hills control the plain, swiftly sliding toward the mouth of the Nile; in a river's bend a boat lies filled with dying or wounded men. A young man, Theagene, and a young girl, Chariclea, will eventually emerge from this waste land of hatred and despair. Chariclea's story will be told to us later in the fourth book of the novel, and we shall learn from it that she is indeed the ideal ancestor of the Tassesque Clorinda. She also is the daughter of the King of Ethiopia, Hydaspe, and of the Queen Persinna, and like Clorinda is born white in spite of the blackness of her parents.

Since the story painted in the Queen's bedroom, which has influenced Chariclea's color, narrates Perseus and Andromeda's love story and stresses the appealing beauty of the naked Andromeda, we should ask ourselves why Tasso has christianized the painting in such a drastic way. In order to understand Tasso's narrative options, we should explore pertinent discussions concerning the use of Christian and pagan angelology in epic poetry, and analyze Tasso's reticence toward or open dissent from positions expressed during the sixteenth century by Giraldi Cinzio and Giangiorgio Trissino, both strongly opposed to bringing into human events and to mobilizing on one side or the other Christian divinity.⁶ But it is perhaps worthwhile to put aside such a discussion here in order to see what has become unequivocally Tassesque in Tasso's imitation of Heliodorus. This is without any doubt a far reaching problem. When Tasso read the Latin translation of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica* made in Basel in 1552 by the Polish humanist Warschewiczki, he was mesmerized by a unique note: the strong chromatic appeal of Chariclea's episode. By absorbing it into the story of Clorinda's ordeal, he was brought to stress it through a web of verbal allusions not unworthy of his usually complex expressive mannerism. First of all, beauty is acknowledged as an artistic feature rooted in a violent accumulation of colors. The girl dominating the ceiling is "Vergine, bianca il bel volto e le gote/vermiglia . . ." (G.L. XII.23,3-4). The vermillion of her cheeks detaches itself, through a strong enjambement, from a

whole dominated by the color white, which is understood as the quintessence of beauty. On the other hand, in the case of Clorinda's mother, we learn that her black complexion does not take away her beauty "...bruna è sì, ma il bruno il bel non toglie," (G.L. XII.21,8), which means that we are confronted with an exceptional gesture of complaisant generosity on the part of the white color which acting from a contiguous chromatic field allows the brown color a victory, however strongly opposed by the vigilant presence of the adversative conjunction. The strong aversion of the two brotherly enemies, black and white, will never end. Along the line of their fratricidal game, the white skin of Clorinda, if not quickly hidden, would expose her mother's "black" betrayal: "ch'egli avria dal candor che in te si vede/ argomentato in lei non bianca fede" (G.L. XII.24,7-8),⁷ as Tasso puts it with a daring conceit.

Tasso's episode, if compared to the rather simple repertory of narrative extravaganzas present in the Greek model, appears to be submitted to the cumulative effects of strongly expressive devices. The ecclesiastical formula "nigra sed formosa," black but comely, downgraded and twisted toward a completely secularized meaning, is entering with Tasso the non-metaphorical road travelled tongue in cheek by a Baroque poet, Giovambattista Marino, in one of his sonnets dedicated to a black beauty.⁸ Compelled by such a strong chromatic mannerism, Tasso is inclined to transfer his taste for contrast and hyperbole within the factual setting of the episode. Thus we are not surprised if Senapo's jealousy assumes voyeuristic overtones and is gradually extended to "gli occhi del cielo," the eyes of the sky, which according to him would indiscreetly admire his own wife, if she were not properly hidden in the secret rooms of an unapproachable home.⁹

But there is more to it. My attention has been recently attracted by the lines of Ovid's fourth book of *Metamorphoses* where Perseus and Andromeda's story is told and by two lines of Petrarch's *Triumphus Cupidinis*, which had appeared until now rather ominous to me. Ovid's story goes as follows:

Quam simul ad duras religatam braccia cautes
vidit Abantiades, nisi quod levis aura capillos
moverat et tepido manabant lumina fletu,
marmoreum ratus esset opus; trahit inscius ignes
et stupet et visae correptus imagine formae
paene suas quatere est oblitus in aëre pennas.
(Ovidius, *Metamorphoseon* . . . IV,671-77)¹⁰

(When Perseus saw her, her arms chained to the hard rock, he would have taken her for a marble statue,

had not the light breeze stirred her hair, and warm tears streamed from her eyes. Without realizing it he fell in love. Amazed at the sight of such rare beauty, he stood still in wonder and almost forgot to keep his wings moving in the air).

Neither now nor later, when Perseus frees the beloved one from the chains, is anything said about Andromeda's colors. One could imagine that the comparison with a marble statue is allusive to whiteness. But I would like to believe that the Latin author is rather color blind, and that the idea of the marble statue stands to emphasize nakedness, the statuesque beauty of a body compelled to immobility and waiting for its imminent, shameful destruction.

Ariosto, who in the tenth canto of his *Orlando Furioso* has a clear recollection of Ovid's representation, introduces Ruggiero riding his hyppogriff in the sky and Angelica tied below, waiting for her destiny:

Creduto avria che fosse statua finta
d'alabastro o d'altri marmi illustri
Ruggiero, e su lo scoglio così avinta
per artificio di scultori industri;
se non vedea la lacrima distinta
tra fresche rose e candidi ligustri
far rugiadose le crudette pome,
e l'aura sventolar l'aurate chiome. (O.F. X.96)¹¹

The girl below appears as beautiful and statuesque as the Ovidian Andromeda, but surrounded by the kaleidoscopic presence of joyful colours: pink, white, gold. This is certainly relevant for Tasso, the painter of the fair-complexioned girl saved by St. George, but the imminent source of his extraordinary poetic reaction is the following two lines of Petrarch's *Triumphus Cupidinis*:

Perseo era l'uno, e volli saper come
Andromeda gli piacque in Etiopia,
 vergine bruna i begli occhi e le chiome. (II.142-144)¹²

Unless we want to read these lines as a sign of some sort of authorial bewilderment when confronted with a love inspired by an eccentric form of beauty — which is obviously not the case — we must acknowledge the fact that the Petrarchan story attributes to Andromeda the beautiful brown colour an Ethiopian girl was supposed to have.

But here we are compelled to pay attention to Tasso's antiphrasitic chromatic reaction to Petrarch's line: "vergine bruna i begli occhi e le chiome." The girl dominating the ceiling of Clorinda's expectant mother is: "Vergine, bianca il bel volto e le gote/ veriglia . . ." (G.L. XII.23,3-4). Thus, as in Petrarch, we have in Tasso what a grammatically minded reader would call an "accusativo di relazione," or an "accusativo alla greca," with, in addition, a strongly expressive enjambement which should not escape our critical attention. The challenge presented to Tasso by Petrarch's line is absolutely impressive. White and red stand in opposition to the — by Petrarch — stressed uniformity of the brown color of beauty. We are confronted with a complex operation which involves *a*) the Christianization of the Heliodorus episode according to rules which strongly differentiate Tasso's point of view from Trissino's and Cinzio's; *b*) a prejudicial radicalization by Tasso of the chromatic aspect of the episode of Persinna, but also the revelation through a memorable semantic analogy, of a Petrarchan challenged presence in the heart of the narrated event.

While Tasso's exotic model is here absorbed, radicalized and submitted to hyperbolic acceleration, we find not far into the same episode an opposite procedure. An understated and subdued quotation from Petrarch, which has lost the lyrical relevance of the model, enters the field of action in a purely factual and referential function. Arsete, who follows Clorinda's footsteps day by day until old age and fatigue overcome him. ("e per l'orme di lei l'antico fianco/d'ogni intorno traendo, or la seguia," (G.L. XII.19,1-2)¹³) reminds the reader of Petrarch's memorable "vecchierello" who, exactly like Arsete, drags his ancient flanks through the last days of his life, but with a purpose in mind. He wants to go to Rome to gaze on the image of Christ whom he hopes to see one day in Heaven face to face. The Petrarchan "vecchierello" rapidly summoned by Tasso, is immediately denied any narrative autonomy and altogether removed from the reader's visual horizon. The fact is that Arsete's tiredness, contrary to that of the "vecchierello" is not mobilized to transcend itself toward a cathartic destiny. Tasso swiftly dislocates the emphasis of the episode away from Arsete toward the content of his traumatic revelation to Clorinda. And it is such a confession that helps the reader to transcend the routine of the daily events which take place within and without the besieged city of Jerusalem.

We must, however, remember that Arsete's confession fails to achieve its anticipated effect, since the learned truth does not succeed in shaping in a positive way Clorinda's future. Clorinda's fate, which had been revealed to Arsete during the first oneiric

epiphany of St. George as being open to several options and to a solution of compromise, in spite of the cathartic expedient introduced by Arsete, appears closed to any optimistic outcome. The laws regulating Tasso's poetic behaviour in the *Gerusalemme* are by now clear to us. Celestial will and the iron decision of the pagan heroes never to operate in the name of abstract values, their this-worldliness, conspire together in a peculiar alliance to bring Clorinda's life to an end. In God's intention, Clorinda has been for much too long the authoritative witness for the pagan cause, so that if a Christian death can still redeem her past errors, she is doomed to disappear without postponement from the ground of the embattled Jerusalem. As for Clorinda herself, Arsete's confession has little appeal to her logic and her coherent militancy. She has taken for granted for far too long the legitimacy of her religious allegiance to change it now under pressure from a bewildered Arsete. It appears obvious to her that any obstacle challenging her commitment to a destiny of glory must be drastically removed, since it is a warrior's duty never to abandon "le imprese e l'arme," that is, perilous deeds and the lance and the sword, to fulfill his professional obligations.

Clorinda's pattern of behaviour far from being unique, is mirrored in the "modus operandi" of all the most important supporters of the pagan cause. For Argante, it is true, Tasso seems to mobilize a Dantesque, energetic and infernal phraseology in order to involve him in a background of rudeness, cruelty and blind violence. But his appearance is deceitful. By not fulfilling his plan, Tasso has unwittingly acted according to the rhetorical devices of what the American new critics used to call the "intentional fallacy." Summoned by his earthly destiny, in fact, Tasso's Argante accepts as self-sufficient and the only questionable reality, the field of his human commitments; he is ebullient, overbearing or arrogant, but substantially true to his secular mission as a defender of a lost cause, coherent in his dutiful acceptance of any kind of challenge. From this point of view, it is perfectly possible to detect and speak of his human growth, his intransigent cult of a warrior's dignity, even of his definition of what we would call the portrait of the pagan hero "sans crainte et sans reproche." The challenge of dangerous situations reveals him at his best. Risk is not for him a blind date with death; rather it is the only possible ground in which his high sense of duty as a warrior can be proved. Since danger is an occasion for emulating Clorinda's bravery, facing it with her becomes the only declaration of love which he, the reticent hero, is allowed to formulate without losing his sense of priorities. Clorinda, who understands him and is the only one

who can speak to him in a tone which is moving and humane, recommends those she loves to him before the most perilous of her enterprises. Argante, of course, will never accept such a humiliating task: he would like to share her dangers, to die if needs be, with her.

No, no: se fui ne l'arme a te consorte,
esser vo' ne la gloria e ne la morte. (G.L. XII.7,7-8)

Seguirò l'orme tue, se mi conduci
Ma le precorrò, se mi ricuse. (G.L. XII.9,3-4)

And thus together they go to share the same glory, not the same death however. But by dissembling their destiny in death, Tasso has been able to write one of the most challenging pages of his poem. Tasso is the poet of unreachable love, of the disheartening loneliness of a passion which never appears more unfulfilled, more beyond grasp than when two people are together. Thus Tancredi, who loves Clorinda, only once touches her physically, even embraces her: during the mortal duel when she is hidden within the armour. The warrior's mask becomes a wall, an incommeasurable abyss separating forever persons who seem to be born to live together. As for Argante, he will meet his destiny with the wrong partner. Tancredi accompanies him through a labyrinthine landscape to a place where he can kill his adversary in absorbing solitude, without a distracting parterre of spectators. The rituals of Argante's silent undertakings, brought to many happy conclusions in the company of Clorinda, are repeated here, while Tancredi and Argante are walking together toward their destiny. Clorinda is still a presence: she is between them, she separates them. They have never been so close, linked by the same love, by the same nostalgia for the dead heroine, and never so distant. The image of her is deep inside their hearts, but cannot be shared; she even, paradoxically, makes the gap between them more unbridgeable, she becomes the occasion of hatred and death:

ché non potrai da le mie man, o forte
de le donne uccisor, fuggir la morte. — (G.L. XIX.3,7-8)

You will never be able to escape death, you strong killer of women, Argante in fact reminds Tancredi, with heavily insulting sarcasm. And yet the one who rises to the challenge of the situation in the end is not Tancredi but Argante, the rough and uncivilized pagan warrior. His farewell to life is at once a profession of faith in his dignity as a warrior who did his duty against all odds and a

meditation on the unavoidable fate of human undertakings, a declaration of love for the falling city of Jerusalem, in which is sealed and uplifted through a metaphorical act of reticent tenderness his untold love for the departed companion, for Clorinda.

Qui si fermano entrambi, e pur sospeso
 volgeasi Argante a la cittade afflitta.
 Vede Tancredi che 'l pagan difeso
 non è di scudo, e 'l suo lontano ei gitta.
 Poscia lui dice: — Or qual pensier t'ha preso?
 pensi ch'è giunta l'ora a te prescritta?
 S'antivedendo ciò timido stai,
 è 'l tuo timore intempestivo ormai.

— Penso — risponde — a la città del regno
 di Giudea antichissima regina,
 che vinta or cade, e indarno esser sostegno
 io procurai de la fatal ruina. . . . (G.L. XIX.9;10,1.4)

Together with Argante, although in strong occasional competition and disagreement with him, we find Solimano, the leader of a group of Arab irregulars, a late appearance in the poem, who has been able with his guerrilla-like attacks to cut the Christian supplies. Solimano's presence translates Tasso's deep feelings about the position pagan warriors deserve to occupy within the framework of the *Gerusalemme*. Being the most intelligent and thoughtful among the Moslems, he is the only one among them who has a perspective over the events he is helping to shape. A king who has lost his kingdom, he understands the true nature of the Christian challenge, the political relevance of its present impact. Having suffered a burning defeat by the Christians, he is craving revenge, but his hostility toward the foes of Jerusalem is never blinding. No wonder it is he who will become Tasso's mouth-piece to delineate the role pagan heroes are bound to play within the poem. Argante's heroism lacks distance from the events, since he is denied a contemplative mood by his impulsiveness. Solimano will eventually reach Argante's instinctive existential conviction that too many questions will eventually cloud the operative horizon of the warrior, and they should therefore be rebuked. But he has curiosity, and under pressure from his inquisitive nature, he challenges the unknown and daringly inquires into the future with the magician Ismeno. He will learn then what the omniscient author knows only too well, that a Christian victory, if a victory will ever be, will be a

precarious accomplishment, and the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem will lose ground and be reconquered by Solimano's descendants. What else can a pagan hero expect, deprived as he is of hope in a rewarding immortality, but to conquer the only space allowed to him, the space of history? But if there is hope for the reacquisition of a lost kingdom in a clouded future, in the challenging present besieging Solimano, there is only a duty to accomplish. He will face his responsibilities according to his rank, his position and the dignity of his profession. As for the struggle, it will appear ultimately to him viewed from above, from a high tower, as a spectacle of hatred and death "*l'aspra tragedia dello stato umano*," the harsh tragedy of the human condition. The moment of thoughtfulness and suspense will be followed, as is obvious, by the decision to accept the challenge; not to be a spectator, but to be ready to go in the middle of the fight and to share dangers and give death. Solimano, however, will be the unprivileged witness of the dehumanizing aspect of war, through him the sensitive poet will be overcome by a "*horror mortis*" which has seldom been expressed with such an overwhelming efficacy. As in a kind of nightmare where "*les jeux sont déjà faits*," and no escape is possible from the approaching danger, the warrior loses sight of reality, captures and freezes in his wide-open eyes the advancing image of death: She has assumed the punishing image of the young Rinaldo.

Giunge all'irresoluto il vincitore,
e in arrivando (o che gli pare) avanza
e di velocitate e di furore
e di grandezza ogni mortal sembianza. (G.L. XX.107,1-4)

The logic of behaviour of the Christian knight obeys far different laws. From the first stanza of the poem, Tasso takes up the task of investigating the presence of centripetal forces (Goffredo especially, but also Piero l'eremita, Raimondo di Tolosa, the rigid custodian of the orthodoxy of a centralized power within the Crusade, Dudone di Consa, etc.) impatiently looking toward a quick end of the Crusade and the conquest of Jerusalem, and the obstacles created by centrifugal, dispersive tensions acting to defeat the dedication of the Crusaders to the holy cause of the deliverance of the sepulchre of Christ. The key words of the first stanza appear to be: "*compagni erranti*," companions who went astray, forces, that is, operating within the Christian camp and contributing unwittingly to the survival of the enemy, to his endurance. Of course one should be aware of the fact that from the

authorial point of view, a word like "error" acquires a twofold sense, a permissible ambivalence that not even the intransigent Cruscanti could deny Tasso: on the one hand, there is a sinful error which will be corrected only when Goffredo, the leader, will be able to bring his fellow knights back from their defection under the Christian flag; on the other, error is wandering, adventure, diversification within the plot, a revitalizing element of the poem to be linked to a concept called by Tasso in his *Discorso dell'Arte poetica*: "il meraviglioso cristiano," the Christian marvellous.¹⁴ Among the nightmares of Tasso's imagination, there is the feeling of a never discontinued presence at the court of Ferrara where Tasso operates, the presence of the still lively memory of Ludovico Ariosto, an object of deep nostalgia for Tasso's contemporaries, in spite of the generation gap. In his *Apologia della Gerusalemme Liberata*, Tasso, who in the name of the Aristotelian rules rebukes the technique of the multiple plot practised by Ariosto, reminds his unsympathetic reader inspired by the intransigence of the Crusca that Ariosto was after all his father's friend. He even naively brings to the fore that, while Bernardo his father had seen all his listeners occasionally disappear from the room where he was reading long-winded poems (out of boredom of course), Ariosto well knew, so he had heard, how to entertain his public of courtiers and how to create their flattering enthusiasm.¹⁵

Elated as he was by Ariosto's grace, and sincerely disturbed by what to his Aristotelian mind appeared to be Ariosto's structural weaknesses, one wonders what Tasso really did learn from Boiardo's and Ariosto's chivalric and romanesque tradition. It is my impression that the role of such a tradition within the poem largely coincides with the "error" of Tasso's Christian knights. Let us take two rather clear examples. Erminia, a pagan, is in love with Tancredi, a leading hero supporting the Christian drive toward Jerusalem, who loves Clorinda, who is also a pagan, or at least conspicuously appears to be one. Tancredi, seriously wounded in his first duel with Argante, lies exhausted in his tent in the middle of the Christian camp. Erminia, who learns that the duel is supposed to start anew as soon as the two champions recover, fearing for the life of the beloved one, keeps wondering whether she should go and poison the wounds of her fellow Moslem (she has learned to use poisonous ingredients from her mother, mind you) or to go and cure the distressed, lying enemy, so blinding has the effect of love become! Since she is good natured and shuns gloomy temptations, she discards poison and decides on the second option, although she instinctively knows that by going out of the walls of the besieged city in a lady-like dress she will make

an unforgivable obstruction to the rules of epic bienséance. Thus she steals Clorinda's white armour (Clorinda happens to be her room-mate) and goes out of the city undisturbed. She will be unable, however, to reach Tancredi. As for the Christian hero, having heard that a warrior dressed like Clorinda is wandering around, he forgets his wounds and goes searching for her everywhere. He will end up, completely unwarranted, in the net of the adventurous Armida, who is stealing away as many Christians as she is able to. Trapped in Armida's castle, he will not be at hand for the second round of his duel with Argante (G.L. VI, VII).

By making Tancredi digress out of his pertinent zone of epic operation and by multiplying structures of interference along his path, Tasso enters the road travelled with masterly skill by Ludovico Ariosto. The second example of Tasso's openness toward the Ariostean temptation can be offered by the case of Rinaldo. Dudone, an elderly warrior, lies dead, killed by Argante. The *avventurieri*, a group of professional die-hard soldiers who do not obey any law but their own, and are spoiled and privileged because of their unquestionable bravery, are looking for a new prestigious leader. To replace Dudone, Eustazio, Goffredo's younger brother, who is trapped in the net of the magic seductress Armida, and is trying to isolate her from those he considers possible challenging rivals, is inclined to make a secret deal with Rinaldo (G.L. V.8-16). Were Rinaldo inclined to stay away from Armida, he would support him as a possible replacement for the departed Dudone. Rinaldo, who has other things in his mind besides women, gently laughs at him and declares his readiness to be chosen out of merit not because of secret deals. But in the struggle for Dudone's succession, Rinaldo kills Gernando, the son of the King of Norway, and is ostracized from the Christian camp (G.L. V.16-52). Tasso dreams for him an exotic destiny: the discovery of the sources of the Nile and the christening of all the Africans who stand in his way (G.L. V.52). But Tasso has no luck. Armida reaches Rinaldo first, falls in love with him, and under the spell of the cathartic but exclusive effect of love, takes him away to the Atlantic Ocean instead, and hides him in an island of her own invention, where he will disappear until Carlo and Ubaldo go and rescue him, returning him to his Christian destiny of glory (G.L. XIV.26-79, XV, XVI).

As for Eustazio, he is not completely forgotten. After his uncanny experience with Armida, he will reenter the Christian camp in a very subdued way, rescued, we presume, by Tancredi. We see him at the end of the poem climbing a ladder to enter the

walls of Jerusalem. Rinaldo, the better skilled warrior, gives him a cooperative hand:

Ed egli stesso a l'ultimo germano
del pio Buglion, ch'è di cadere in forse,
stesa la vincitrice amica mano,
di salirne secondo aita porse. (G.L. XVIII.79,1-4)

"Tout se tient!" "O gran bontà dei cavalieri antiqui!" This is pure Ariosto. Ariosto, of course, would have smiled at this happy return of togetherness and would have told about it tongue in cheek. But gravity alone befits the unsmiling Tassesque heroes, whatever befalls them.

It should be explained here that the presence within the poem of diversifying trends built up according to a taste which preserves traces of an intelligent and thoughtful assimilation of the chivalric tradition, does not necessarily deny value to Galileo's critical assertion that Tasso's *Gerusalemme* as a text is dominated by broken and loose concepts deprived of connection or smoothness. Galileo calls to task through a daring analogy intarsio painting, the inlaid work with its cutting edges, with its dry and crude figures without the sweet projections and the wash of colors of oil painting.¹⁶ What Galileo seems to mean, in our terms, is that Tasso's epic discourse does not attain logical articulateness, dominated as it is by allusiveness and highly suggestive approaches to reality. But this technique, so typically Tassesque, in spite of Galileo's disdain, must be considered truly innovative and an alluring anticipation of relevant modernity.

If we have to face the poem, however, in terms of levels of meanings, and stratifications of thoughts, we are confronted with a series of data looking for a less generic critical statement. For the meaningful study of the *Gerusalemme* *qua* narrative construction, we must acknowledge the fact that we are dealing with an obstructed plot which needs intermittent epiphanies in order to allow the poet to lead the story toward an exalting and triumphant epilogue. In order to understand this, a deep inquiry into the structures of thought and into the motivations of Goffredo as a leader is strictly indispensable. With the language of the narratologist and of the structural critic, we could say that to detect the orientation of Goffredo as an actant on the plot is perhaps as important as to interpret his interior being as a character of the story. In other words, Goffredo's painful incertitudes and perplexities when called upon to resolve the increasingly confused situation within the Christian camp, his tormented oscillation in

dealing with those who fight on the side of disorder and chaos, are truthful mirrors of the authorial intention to extricate the plot from events politically and militarily insoluble, but also of his secret fear of not having the necessary tools to bring it to a concrete fulfillment. Goffredo receives an investiture from above, from God through Gabriel who comes to see him face to face (G.L. I.6-18). From God also he receives a kind of charismatic initiation into leadership and the possibility, with it, of freeing himself from his specific responsibilities toward the French speaking ethnic group and from the egalitarian coexistence with the other leaders which had lasted five long years. By concentrating leadership in Goffredo's hands, Tasso does not fail to realize that the alternative to such a strategic move would have been to leave things unchanged and to accept the intemperate disorder of a war left to the chaotic initiative of different groups of warriors and their national ways and byways of attaining success. As a matter of fact, an aristocratic and feudal ideology according to which the fragmentation of authority is conducive to a far greater individual heroism, comes to the fore through the statements of a knight who indeed only barely expresses himself with glimmers of rationality, the Apulian-Norman Tancredi. When he finds himself involved in defending before Goffredo the difficult cause of Rinaldo who has killed a fellow Christian, the Norwegian Gernando, he ends up by stating an elitist theory of the personality of law according to which each warrior should be judged taking into account his rank and his contribution to the Crusade (G.L. V.36). One could argue that unless Tancredi judges the fact that Gernando is the son of the King of Norway as a title for demotion, it is difficult to understand why Rinaldo should be considered as belonging to a different social rank and status than his antagonist.

It is in any event true that Tancredi's theory involves a concept of justice that if applied with coherence would completely frustrate the unification of command. Goffredo rightly answers Tancredi's proposal emphasizing the importance of teaching the rank and file of the Christian army that he, Goffredo, is the leader of the common soldier as well as of the aristocratic elite. It is unfortunately well known that the implicit condemnation of Rinaldo's impulsive action opens an hiatus in the plot that compromises the final success of the Crusade, and that only by erasing his decision can Goffredo help the cause he represents. Thus, the second leap forward in the plot takes place with the decisive acknowledgement on Tasso's part of the need of a second divine intervention. This occurs at the beginning of canto XIV through the expediency of Goffredo's oneiric assumption to the Paradise of the warriors (G.L.

XIV.1-19). Structures of incoherence and discontinuity take hold of the plot, but the poet had no other way to resolve the dilemma open before him when confronted with the expansion within the poem of the semantic contrasting fields of truth and authority. If the authority given to Goffredo by God is stronger than anarchy and drastically condemns Rinaldo's insubordination, truth, which exists in God as an order of reason superior to human understanding, overcomes the strength of authority correcting its trajectory and contradicting its schemes. Dante's poem comes to mind and Tasso's assimilation of it, as well as the frontier of the Tassesque intelligence of the Dantesque message. Dante's logic of ascent which is a difficult acquisition of the divinity, his journey toward eternity moving away from time and history, is countered in the *Gerusalemme* by the flashing penetration of God's light into earthly events: a light rending here and there, from time to time, the clouds of our ignorance and enlightening the improbable roads of human undertakings. The study of the fragmentation of the Dantesque message in the *Gerusalemme* could very well pave the way to our detection of the narrative structures of Tasso's poem. Memory becomes thus the revealing mirror of poetry in its most personal and inalienable voice.

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NOTES

*A slightly different version of this paper was read at the conference "The Lessons of History" organized by Ruth Mortimer on behalf of Smith College and the Renaissance Society of America on October 27 and 28, 1979, to honor the memory of Myron Gilmore.

- 1 For an examination of this and other problems involving the Crusanti, Galileo and Tasso, see T. Wlassics, *Galilei critico letterario* (Ravenna, 1974); D. Della Terza, "Galileo letterato: Considerazioni al Tasso," in *Forma e Memoria* (Roma, 1979), pp.197-221.
- 2 I am extending to the concept of "invention" Génot's statement concerning "verisimilitude": "Il s'agit de raisonner plutôt sur le fonctionnement que sur le contenu de cette notion." See G. Génot, "L'écriture libératrice: Le vraisemblable dans la *Jerusalem délivrée* du Tasse," in *Communications*, 11 (1968), 34. Génot has more recently returned to the "functional topology" of Tasso's *Gerusalemme* in his: *I gran giochi del caso e de la sorte*, (Paris, 1974).
- 3 Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* is quoted throughout from *Tutte le poesie di Torquato Tasso*, a cura di L. Caretti, vol.I (Milano 1957). Occasional quotations from or allusions to T. Tasso's *Gerusalemme Conquistata* come from *La Gerusalemme Liberata e la Gerusalemme Conquistata*, ed. F. Flora e E. Mazzali (Milano 1952).
- 4 Arsete's story is to be found in *Gerusalemme Liberata*, XII. 18-42; *Gerusalemme Conquistata* XV.18-40. The names "Senapo — David" are in G.L. XII.21.2 and G.C. XV..21.2. In G.C. XV.41-47 Tasso adds to Arsete's story — which is left basically unchanged — Clorinda's dream. She sees a marvellous tree protecting scores of people with its shade; a limpid, purifying spring, a giant who fights and defeats

her, and finally her own lofty ascent toward heaven in a burning chariot. It is a partly dreadful, partly splendid anticipation of her imminent destiny.

5 The Heliodorus manuscript was discovered in 1526 in the library of Matthias Corvinus and printed at Basel in 1534. Besides the cited translation into Latin by Warschewiczki (1552) there was an earlier French translation by Jacques Amyot (1547). For the *Aethiopica* I have consulted the edition Rattenbury and Lumb (Paris, 1935) and the translation by J. Maillon. On Heliodorus I also found useful: M. Oeftering, *Heliodorus und seine Bedeutung für die Literatur* (Halle, 1901). I am grateful to Christopher Jones, the distinguished classical philologist from the University of Toronto, for having allowed me to read his paper, "Sophists and Novelists," where the identity of Heliodorus is thoroughly discussed.

6 For a thoughtful analysis of Cinzio's *Discorso intorno al comporre de i romanzi* and of G. G. Trissino's "complex angelology" operating within the frame of his *Italia liberata da' Goti*, see G. Baldassarri, "Inferno" e "Cielo." *Tipologia e funzione del "Meraviglioso" nella Liberata* (Roma, 1977), especially pp.25-28.

7 I would like to stress here the importance of two seminal essays by F. Chiappelli, both dedicated to characters of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*: "A possible source fission for two Tasso characters," *Stanford Italian Review* (Spring 1979), 121-132; and "La costruzione drammatica di un personaggio: Clorinda," which I read in manuscript, thanks to Prof. Chiappelli's kind permission.

8 Marino's sonnet begins: "Nera sì, ma se' bella, o di natura/fra le belle d'amor leggiadro mostro." See *La Lira*, parte III, "Amori," in Giambattista Marino, *Opere*, ed. Alberto Asor Rosa (Milano, 1967), pp.336-337.

9 "N'arde il marito, e de l'amore al foco
ben de la gelosia s'agguglia il gelo.
Si va in guisa avanzando a poco a poco
nel tormentoso petto il folle zelo
che da ogn'uom la nasconde, e in chiuso loco
vorria celarla a i tanti occhi del cielo.
Ella, saggia ed umil, di ciò che piace
al suo signor fa suo diletto e pace." (G.L. XII.22)

10 *Die Metamorphosen des P. Ovidius Naso*, ed. Moriz Haupt (Berlin, 1885).

11 L. Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, ed. S. Debenedetti (Bari, 1928), vol. I, p. 218.

12 F. Petrarca, *Rime, Trionfi e poesie latine*, ed. F. Neri, G. Martellotti, E. Bianchi, N. Sapegno (Milano, 1951). Tasso does not take into consideration the elegantly derivative conclusion of Bembo's *canzonetta* "Io vissi pargoletta in doglia e 'n pianto" which also deals with the theme of Andromeda. See *Gli Asolani* I.3, in P. Bembo, *Prose e Rime*, ed. C. Dionisotti (Torino, 1960), p.319. Bembo's last stanza reads as follows:
Infin quel dì, che pria la punse Amore,
Andromeda ebbe sempre affanno e noia;
poi ch'a Perseo si diè, diletto e gioia
seguilla viva, e morta eterno onore.

13 For Petrarch's sonnet XVI, see F. Petrarca, *Le Rime*, ed. G. Carducci e S. Ferrari (Firenze, 1957), p.17.

14 T. Tasso, *Discorsi dell'arte poetica e del poema eroico*, ed. L. Poma (Bari, 1964), especially pp.1-16. I should note here that Tasso mentions the novel by Heliodorus in both the *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* (p. 13) and the *Discorsi del poema eroico* (p.108).

15 Cf. T. Tasso "Dell'allegoria, dell'apologia e del giudizio sopra la sua *Gerusalemme*," in *Prose diverse*, ed. C. Guasti (Firenze, 1815), II.

16 G. Galilei, *Opere*, volume IX (Firenze, 1899).

The Strangeness of Strangers: English Impressions of Italy in The Sixteenth Century*

Italy has always exercised a seductive fascination for English travellers. From the time in which Gregory the Great identified *Angli* with *angeli* to the present proliferation of packaged Cook's tours and historic Tuscan villas bearing curiously incongruous English names, the appeal of the peninsula for the inhabitants of what was once the farthest outpost of the Roman Empire has remained powerful. Just to list the English travellers to and inhabitants of Italy would read like an only slightly abbreviated *Dictionary of National Biography*; and of those not catalogued, a significant majority would probably have agreed with Samuel Johnson and admitted to an inferiority.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that the perceptions of Italy and the Italians have been uniformly positive. Indeed, there has always been a powerful dichotomy, a species of schizophrenia, in the English appreciation of the peninsula. On the one hand, Italy was viewed, in the opinion of one visitor in 1549, William Thomas, as "the nation which seemeth to flourish in civility most of all other at this day,"¹ an opinion repeated by another English visitor a century later, John Milton, who judged Italy to be "the lodging place of humanities and of all the arts of civilisation."²

On the other hand, however, Italy was equally seen as a dangerous place, a fulsome arena of murder, treachery, licentiousness and atheism. A contemporary of Thomas, Sir John Cheke, observed in 1554 that "the misery and beastliness of this country is such that for men to bear pains and travails in it is good enough,"³ a vision also carried to the end of the century by the novelist Thomas Nashe, who characterised Italy as the school for "the art of epicurizing, the art of whoring, the art of poisoning, the art of sodomy."⁴ The *dramatis personae* of late Elizabethan, Jacobean and Caroline tragedies reinforce this situation; from Iago to Bosola,

the Italian personality and the disposition of the country were assumed to breed vice, treachery and lingering death.

The most common explanation for this division of opinion has been that the Reformation caused an anti-Catholic and hence an anti-Italian reaction by the Protestant English. That suggestion is manifestly incorrect. All of the gentlemen whose observations are recorded above were Protestants and some, like Thomas, Cheke and Milton, rather extreme Protestants; Nashe was an anti-Puritan Anglican. Milton, of course, served as Oliver Cromwell's secretary and Thomas was Clerk of the Privy Council under Edward VI and Jane Grey; yet both of these men saw the peninsula as a blessed land, an example to the world. Cheke, and his continuator and pupil, Roger Ascham, however, although equally advanced Protestants, saw Italy as a blight on Europe and Italians as diabolical. Religion provided much ammunition and even more emotion to the anti-Italians but the Reformation of the English church or the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation cannot be seen as sufficient cause for this complexity of English attitudes.

What, then, is the reason for this ambiguous relationship between England and Italy in the sixteenth century? The causes are complex and do not easily sustain any dramatic or simplistic generalisations. Thus, the most effective means of investigating the question is to study the recorded impressions of English visitors to Italy during the sixteenth century within the context of their historical circumstances and their own experiences to reveal the forces at work, both positive and negative, direct and indirect. The middle years of the century will be examined most closely because it was in those years that the English appreciation of Italian culture became relatively widespread. It was then that the Elizabethan courtier became an *inglese italiano*, and even, on occasion, *un diavolo incarnato*. Also, of course, that was the period of the Reformation, the event which removed England from the spiritual orbit of Rome and the political orbit of the Catholic powers. The visions and observations of the Italian peninsula made in those years pre-disposed the images of the subsequent century in which Machiavels eagerly poisoned characters with Italian names who practised murder, incest, treachery and torture on stages identified as Italian courts. Clearly, whatever resolution to the question there might be resides in the period which initially gave rise to it.

English visitors to Italy in the early years of the sixteenth century conformed much more to the traditional, medieval patterns of travel undertaken for reasons of spiritual obligation, clerical ambition, economic gain or advanced study, usually in the

professions. These men doubtlessly were affected by their experiences abroad and a number of them have left vivid accounts of their impressions in Italy, as George Parks has noted in his *English Traveler to Italy*, which discusses the years prior to 1515.⁵ However, with only a very few exceptions, the attitudes of these early visitors are those of men who saw themselves as part of a universal order, a singular Christian commonwealth, cemented by a common language, Latin. Indeed, between Chaucer in the fourteenth century and Sir Thomas Wyatt in the sixteenth, there was only a single translation of an Italian work directly into English, and that was a *jeu d'esprit*, a treatise on gambling prepared as a joke for Sir Thomas More by his friend, the Padua-trained schoolmaster, William Lyl.⁶ Therefore, before the late 1520's, English visitors saw Italy in a way not very different from the package tour traveller of today. They described the ruins, the places of interest, the agricultural and cultural productions, but there is almost no sensitivity to the people, the customs, the *mores* or the civilisation of the Italian Renaissance, except as a distant edifice at which to marvel briefly and then move on. These men saw Italy as part of a continuing Catholic, Roman universal polity; their primary interests were in the manifestations and monuments of that universal order, for it was that still living tradition which had attracted them to the peninsula in the first place, since Italy remained a very important locus in that vision. All roads still led to Rome.

The events of the Reformation necessarily altered these traditions, although not in the ways most commonly believed. England and Italy actually grew closer in some respects because of the divorce of Henry VIII. During the 1529 canvassing of the continental universities to secure acceptable opinions on the invalidity of the King's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, the prestigious universities of Italy had a prominent place. To ensure a favourable judgement from Rome, English delegations travelled continuously to and from the Curia; and, in turn, a number of high Italian ecclesiastics resided in England. Even after the break with Rome this intimacy progressed. Archbishop Cranmer had great sympathy for the theology of the abortive Italian Reformation and brought a number of learned, usually humanistically trained, Reformers to England to help preside over the reconstitution of the English church. Bernardino Ochino, Pietro Martire Vermigli, Emmanuelle Tremelli and Pietro Bizzarri enjoyed the highest respect in the universities, in the church and at court. They disseminated from these lofty places not only a new theology but a dedication to good letters and to the Italian civilisation which they carried with them as important pieces of their intellectual baggage.

Finally, the young, humanistically trained scholars who had left England to study the New Learning in the secular atmosphere of the University of Padua returned home, often at Thomas Cromwell's bidding, to fill the Tudor bureaucracy and become pamphleteers in the escalating propaganda war against the radicals on the left and the conservatives on the right. Cromwell, who himself had lived in Italy as a young man, saw the advantage of utilising the services of such well educated laymen, skilled in argument and rhetoric, to help establish the Henrician order. And, because of these men, such as Richard Morison and Thomas Starkey, the familiarity with and access to Italian civilisation spread down from the highest pinnacles of the court to the educated gentry and mercantile classes who saw an Italian humanist education as a certain social escalator. Italy, then, during the 1530's and 1540's was not the home of the Anti-Christ as much as it was the graduate school of humanism and the *vita civile*, providing, especially at the great Venetian University of Padua, a secular education in *litterae humaniores* then available nowhere else.⁷

What had begun as the aristocratic affectations of a handful of poet-courtiers gathered around Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey early in Henry's reign had become by its end a substantial movement of dedicated humanists, Italianate insofar as most of them had studied in Italy, knew the language and the culture or had great respect for the learned *riformatori* who had recently joined their own theologians in an attempt to establish a Church with a particularly English, doctrinarily eclectic, character.

Therefore, neither the advancement of the Reformation in England nor even the establishment of the Roman Inquisition in 1542 and the Venetian *Tre savi sopra eresia* in 1547 curtailed the flow of English travellers to Italy during the middle years of the century. What these events did accomplish, however, was a change in the character of the travellers. First, they were virtually all laymen, the justification for clerical visits to Rome now having evaporated; second, they were gentlemen of good birth who saw the advantages of an Italian education in furthering their careers in the royal service; third, they were increasingly men of culture and sophistication who had enjoyed at least some university training before going to the peninsula. These men wanted not only the professional advantages of a humanistic education — which, after all, had become available in England by the 1540's — but also the patina of culture, manners and social finesse which had made the image of the *cortegiano* a model of aristocratic behaviour throughout Europe, but especially in England.⁸

Moreover, besides changing the social profile of the English

visitors, the events of the Reformation changed their points of view, their assumptions about the place. The traditional attitude of seeing Italy as but another, albeit the most important, place in the universal order of the *Respublica Christiana*, strongly identified with its Roman antecedents, had necessarily passed forever. The unity of the Church and of the idea of Empire had been shattered irrevocably. The travellers saw themselves as Englishmen much more than previously, members of a national church and subjects of a national *imperium* ruled by a King who enjoyed the authority of *imperator in suo regno*. Because of this transformation in perspective on the part of the English visitors, the Italians underwent a concomitant change in the perception of these foreigners. The Italians were suddenly a totally different people with local, national customs and an alien culture. Differences rather than similarities were stressed increasingly: they became an exotic, peculiar race. Because the observer had changed, so did the observed. And it was this metamorphosis on the part of English visitors which brought about their discovery of Italy as an exotic land, full of strange and curious people so different from themselves, peculiarities which the travellers sought to record, analyse and understand, if they could. It was thus that the perceptions of the Italian character which ultimately led to the dual strains of Italophilia and Italophobia were born.

What, then, is important to stress is that the English were for the first time looking at Italians as a totally distinct nationality in its own unusual habitat, rather than as but another branch of the universality and brotherhood of Christian, Latin civilisation. The Italians had not really been transformed, it was the English who had, and as events — which often had little to do with Italy at all — influenced their continental policies, their impressions of the peninsula changed correspondingly, usually for the worse.

Nevertheless, if these two strains run concurrently throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, the time during which Englishmen truly became intimate with the peninsula as the locus of a contemporary civilisation, and if, as has been shown by George Parks, the English impression of Italy manifested in literature declined into a caricature of lascivious vice by the end of the century and throughout much of the next,⁹ how can the existence of a new class of informed English visitors, progenitors of the grand tourist of the eighteenth century, explicate the division? Quite simply, I think the answer is that not every traveller liked what he saw, once he took the trouble and had the faculties to understand the society and culture of late Renaissance Italy. Because these men were searching for a deeper understanding of

Italian civilisation, they looked behind the brilliant façades and classical survivals into the character of the people. For most English visitors, the experience was illuminating, meaningful and positive, providing the foundation for the Italianate fashion of the reign of Elizabeth; but for a vocal and literarily influential minority the result was a severe attack of culture shock, a shock too powerful to be born with equanimity by an insular mind.

Let us return to the specific examples of Englishmen who knew or actually visited Italy in the third quarter of the century and left their impressions of that nation. The most significant of these travellers, and the one who did more than any other before Thomas Hoby's translation of Castiglione appeared to make Italy a familiar place in the English intellectual geography, was William Thomas. Thomas went to Italy initially as a felenious fugitive, having stolen a large sum of money from his noble employer, fleeing with it to the continent.¹⁰ However, Thomas made restitution and was forgiven, although he thought it prudent to remain abroad, an exile he spent almost altogether in Italy.

The fruits of his sojourn on the peninsula were two books which for the first time made Italy and the Italian language easily available to the literate Englishman. In 1549 appeared Thomas' *History of Italy* and in 1550 his *Italian Grammar*, both pioneer works which spread the fashion of things Italian from the courtly circles still excited by Wyatt's translations of Petrarch and Aretino of twenty years before. Besides the testimony of his books, Thomas' opinions and personal predilections must have favourably disposed a number of English gentlemen to view Italy as the home of a vital, attractive, contemporary civilisation. For example, Thomas wrote of Italian gentlemen:

In manners and conditions they are no less agreeable than in their speech: so honorable, so courteous, so prudent and so grave withal that it should seem each one of them to have had a princely bringing up: to his superior obedient, to his equal humble, and to his inferior gentle and courteous; amiable to a stranger and desirous with courtesy to win his love.¹¹

For Thomas, Italian gentlemen were such that "none other nation is like them in majesty."¹² His praise is warm and sincere, his appreciation of all aspects of the nation, both ancient and contemporary, deep and well considered.

Without doubt, Thomas' books exerted a powerful influence on his fellow courtiers. Among his close associates was Sir John Cheke, the Cambridge scholar. If Thomas was the favourite companion of the young King Edward VI, Cheke was his respected tutor. Thomas was Clerk of Northumberland's Council; Cheke was

a member of it, rising at the end of the reign and during the nine day wonder of the next to the position of Secretary of State. These men worked closely together of necessity and shared the same religious affinities for very advanced Protestantism, a confessional allegiance which took Thomas to the block and Cheke to the Tower after the victory of Mary Tudor.¹³

When released by Mary in 1554, Cheke had little choice but to leave England, and his refuge during the first half of the Marian diaspora was Italy. He explained his motives for this decision to his Catholic successor, Sir William Petre, stating that he "intended to learn not only the Italian language, which he despaired not of, but also philosophically to course over the civil law; not seeking perfection, which requires a man's life, but avoiding the extremities of ignorance, and learning to give aim like a shooter."¹⁴ In short, Cheke had been attracted to Italy by the reputation of its universities, in this case Padua, where he ultimately settled, and by a perception on his part that some greater familiarity with the Italian language would be of some service.

Obviously, Cheke's choice of Italy was in part conditioned by his close association with Thomas, the leading Italophile of Edward's court. However, it was reinforced by his relations with Italian residents in England with whom he had been intimate. That curious astrologer and brilliant mathematician, Girolamo Cardano, who had once, he swears, been rector of the *studio di Padova*,¹⁵ had lodged with Cheke during a trip to London in which he had cast the horoscopes of the entire Edwardian court, including that of his special friend, Cheke.¹⁶ At Cambridge, it had been Cheke, functioning as a royal visitor, who had secured a fellowship for Pietro Bizzarri at his own College, St. John's, despite the Italian's uncertain academic qualifications.¹⁷ He knew both Peter Martyr and Tremelli quite well and must have at least enjoyed the acquaintance of Ochino.¹⁸ Thus, Italy was not a totally unknown place to Cheke because of his close connections with men of that nation while in England; and consequently, it was with high expectations that he journeyed south, in the company of the other great *italianato* of Henrician and Edwardian England, his friend, associate and fellow Protestant, Sir Richard Morison, the Padua trained civil lawyer who had adapted Machiavelli for the King's use during the pamphlet wars of the 1530's and 40's and who had utilised his knowledge of Roman law to argue for the King's right to dispose of the visible church, at least in England, acting *legibus solutus*.¹⁹ Clearly, Cheke expected much of his Italian voyage; instead, he encountered misery and his own narrow mindedness which turned his visit into a disaster.

On reaching Padua, Cheke appeared pleased enough, describing the city as "fair and quiet" in his first letter from there, written early in July 1554.²⁰ However, just two weeks later, on 22 July, Cheke was writing to Petre, complaining about the place and the people:

I am here in a country much esteemed in opinion, indeed not such as a man would have guessed it, I am yet unskilful thereof and therefore cannot judge certainly without rashness, else to judge at the first sight I would say that neither for private order, nor yet common behaviour it is anything to our own barbarous supposed country. Courtesans in honour, haunting of evil houses noble, breaking of marriage a sport, murder in a gentleman magnaminity, robbery, finess if it be clean conveyed, for the spying is judged the fault and not the stealing, religion to be best that best agreeth with Aristotle's *De anima*, the common tennant though not in kind of tennancy, marvellously kept bare, the gentleman nevertheless yet barer that keepeth him so; in speech cautious, in deed scarce, more liberal in asking than in giving. They say the farther we go into Italy, the worse. . . .²¹

Cheke did try to pass his time profitably. Besides reading Greek with Thomas Wilson, he lived comfortably at Padua where he shared a house (after 2 November) with Hoby and another Englishman, Sir Thomas Wrothe, and together they determined to "spend their time as honestly and as dutifully as they can and pass away those cares that might grieve the absent."²² However, he still complained to his wife that "the misery and beastliness of this country is such that for men to bear pains and travails in it is good enough but otherwise not for the English and especially those who knoweth what good bringing up meaneth."²³ Here was probably Cheke's greatest complaint about Italy: the Italians were not English and refused to behave as if they were. It was as though his views on the need to maintain the purity of the English language had been projected into his life as a whole. Cheke again wrote to his wife from outside Venice before he took up his "womanly quarters"²⁴ at Padua:

your unhapp in this thing [his fall and exile] is happy that it is not troubled with the strangeness of strangers; which thing next to an evil Religion, is to my Nature most odious, and yet I may say for myself if any Englishman of longtime have been of strangers and, learned, much made of, I have had my part thereof, being honoured for many things which they know me not think to be in me.

Divert your next letters to Venice unto me, whither me think I go as Paul, warned, went to Jerusalem.²⁵

Therefore, even if Cheke had lived longer after his return to

England, he would never have become a proponent of Italian culture. It is significant that his preface to Thomas Hoby's translation of *Il Cortegiano* concerns itself not at all with the contents of the book but only with his own preoccupation with unadulterated English.²⁶ Despite his wide learning and dedication to classical scholarship, Cheke's essential attitude looks back to John Skelton rather than forward to John Harington.

Cheke's disciple, Roger Ascham, was either totally influenced by his teacher's thinking regarding Italy or independently shared the extremity of those views. In *The Scholemaster* (1570), Ascham rails against the Italian vogue. He confesses that he was "once in Italie myself [as Sir Richard Morison's secretary in 1551]: but I thanke God, my abode there was but ix dayes: And yet I saw in that little tyme, in one Citie [Venice] more libertie to sinne, than ever I heard tell of in our noble Citie of London in ix yeare."²⁷

Indeed, Ascham's vituperation against Italy, Italian manners and Italian culture help animate the rather dulling length of *The Scholemaster*, produced almost twenty years after he had returned from the peninsula. Let the following, characteristic passage suffice:

And yet ten Morte Arthures do not the tenth part so much harme, as one of these booke made in Italie and translated in England. They open, not fond and common wayes to vice, but such sute, cunnyng, new and diverse shifftes, to cary yong willes to vanitie and yong wittes to mischief, to teach old bawdes new schole poyntes, as the simple head of an English man is not hable to invent, nor ever was hard of in England before, yea when papistrie overflowed all. Suffer these booke to be read, and they shall soone displace all booke of godly learnyng. For they, caryng the will to vanitie and marryng good maners, shall easily corrupt the mynde with ill opinions and false judgement in doctrine: first, to thinke ill of all trewe Religion, and at last to thinke nothyng of God hym selfe, one speciall pointe that is to be learned in Italie and Italian bookees. . . .

That Italian, that first invented the Italian Proverbe against our English men Italianated, ment no more their vanitie in living, than their lewd opinion in Religion: For in calling them Devilis he carieth them clene from God: and yet he carieth them no farder, than they willinglie go themselves, that is, where they may freely say their mindes, to open contempe of God and all godliness, both in living and doctrine.²⁸

This invective was continued by Ascham's contemporary, William Harrison, whose description of England was published in *Holinshed's Chronicles* in 1577 and thereafter. The popularity of the *Chronicles*, together with the dissemination of Ascham's treatise, did little to reinforce the positive opinions of Italy published by Thomas at the middle of the century. Harrison, in his discussion of universities wrote:

One thing only I mislike in them [English students], and that is their usual going into Italy, from whence very few without special grace do return good men, whatsoever they pretend of conference or practice, chiefly the physicians — so much also may be inferred of lawyers — who under pretence of seeking foreign simples do oftentimes learn the framing of such compositions as were better unknown than practised, as I have heard often alleged, and therefore it is most true what Dr. Turner said: "Italy is not to be seen without a guide, that is, without special grace given from God, because of the licentious and corrupt behaviour of the people."²⁹

Evidently, the dictum of Sir William Cecil — who was Cheke's brother-in-law and Ascham's fellow student — to suffer not thy sons to cross the Alps³⁰ had a legitimate history, a history ever building with the passage of the century.

To introduce Cecil's opinions leads to the rehearsal of a curious comparison between the people and countries of Italy and Germany sent to that gentleman in 1567 by one Edward Moorecroft, clearly another anti-Italian traveller but one without the high profile and national stature of Cheke, Ascham and Harrison.³¹ The significance of Moorecroft's attitudes is thus in its proof that influential writers such as those named above were not engaging in any kind of literary convention of Italophobia in their works. Rather, given the evidence of Moorecroft's letter, they appear to have been recording a relatively widespread prejudice manifested by English observers from at least the generation of Cheke.

Moorecroft's actual letter deserves some mention. He writes:

Every country has its fashion of vice: As . . . the Italians in whoring, that I say no worse of them, every which vice with every of these are counted small or no offences, because they are after the fashion (as great hose be with us) and according to the custome of the country . . . [I] will never prefer the painted formality of the Italians to the German's integrity and tasting the cheese potage, cheese puddings and cheese tarts of Italy will not mislike the sup or brose of Germany. None shall like Italy unless he be Italizate [sic], and the proverb says *Anglus italicizatus demon incarnatus*, and so say the French and Germans of their countrymen. . . . The hills are woodless, the sea fishless, the women shameless and the men graceless. . . .³²

How far we are from William Thomas' encomium of the Italian nation! Nevertheless, although the intent is manifestly completely opposed to Thomas', there remains clear allusions to or echoes of Thomas' esteem in such censures. The implication is that Moorecroft and Cheke before him knew Thomas' book and in fact probably used it as a guide during their travels. Thus, not even the most strident anti-Italian could escape its cadences or focus. Even though Thomas' praises have been turned into vituperation, the

components of the Italian landscape and character remain fixed for English visitors because his inspired vision of Italy had been canonised in his book. Indeed, this suggestion is reinforced by the survival of the travel journal of an anonymous English priest who journeyed to Italy with the party of Lord Montague and the Bishop of Ely sent to carry Queen Mary's obedience to the pope in 1555.³³ This diary is a very traditional account of the marvels — both religious and historical — principal personages and places and topography. The writer conformed to the Medieval profile of English traveller: a Roman Catholic priest who still saw Italy as did his antecedents, as part of the universal world order of European Christianity. There is no discussion of the national particularisms and peculiarities of the Italians; what interests the observer most is the sacred relics and exotic animals kept on view in the cities through which he passes. Nevertheless, although in every way dissimilar from the *italianati* described by Ascham and hardly a sophisticated traveller, this anonymous priest decides against discussing entire categories of landmarks — including the classical monuments of Rome — because they were included in Thomas' book, a text he assumes his readers would know. He concludes: "To write anything of the antiquities of Rome, I thought it needless, considering that they are truly and notably set forth in William Thomas' on the Description of Italy."³⁴

Therefore, one aspect of the duality of the English attitude to Italy can certainly be traced to the continued influence which Thomas' book had on subsequent travellers. Although these later visitors might not have shared Thomas' laudatory vision of the peninsula, they could not escape the contours which his great book gave to their intellectual maps. It is for this reason that the opinions of Cheke and Ascham often appear reminiscent of or obliquely allude to Thomas, but in mirror image. Because they discussed the same elements from opposing perspectives the English impressions of Italy developed in parallel, as positive and negative reflections of the same subject.

What, however, of the orthodox disciples of Thomas? Who were they and how did they see the peninsula, these *inglesi* *italianati* so disparaged by Cheke, Ascham, Harrison and Moorecroft? The first and most interesting observation is that the *italianati* were often identical in religion, social status, education and career with the anti-Italians, and, in fact, were often associated and friendly with them. Admittedly, there were some Italophiles of the highest birth, such as the Earl of Bedford and Sir John Harington, cousin of Queen Elizabeth and translator of Ariosto. But, as with the Italophobes, the majority of these preceptors of Italian culture, the

apologists for the peninsula, tended to be middling gentlemen who through ability, education and connections were on their way up, often aided by their Italian experiences, especially under Elizabeth who was something of an *italianata* herself, although she had never seen the continent.

Of all the mid-century *italianati*, the most attractive and by far the most influential was Sir Thomas Hoby, the translator of Castiglione.³⁵ Hoby spent many years as a student and an exile in Italy on two occasions, first from 1548-1550, and again from 1554-5. During his first visit he not only studied at the University of Padua but made an exhaustive grand tour of the peninsula which ultimately took him down to the tip of Sicily. Indeed, his rationale for taking this then unusual last step indicates the extent of his interest in Italy and his desire to grow closer to its people and avoid his English fellow travellers.³⁶ He wrote in his journal that he went to Sicily "both to have a sight of the country and also to absent myself for a while out of Englishmen's company for the tongue's sake."³⁷ Cheke would hardly have done that.

Hoby was duly rewarded for his efforts. The local inhabitants provided him with every courtesy, giving him shelter, entertainment and useful advice when in need.³⁸ His opinions of the people of Italy reveal a familiarity with all aspects of life in that country as well as with its diversity — a fact noted, significantly by all travellers who notwithstanding generalise about the Italians as a singular race. Here is Hoby's description of Siena: "The people are much given to entertain strangers gently. Most of the women are well learned and write excellently well both in prose and verse."³⁹ There are no courtesans in honour there, apparently. Equally, unlike Cheke's "womanly quarters," Hoby finds "fair chambers and pleasant rooms."⁴⁰ Moreover, almost every page is filled with appreciative descriptions of the skill and industry of the Italians, the commodities produced and the antiquities preserved. Consequently, Hoby's decision to translate Castiglione during his second visit to Italy was not an enterprise of idleness: it was a tribute to a society and a civilisation he knew well and admired greatly.

Another celebrated Italophile was Francis Russell, Second Earl of Bedford. While a student at Cambridge — at about the same time Hoby was in residence, that is, during the humanistic hegemony of Cheke and Ascham — Russell was converted to advanced Protestantism; he was also infected with Italophilia, carrying down with him as his personal secretary Pietro Bizzarri, who preferred service in an aristocratic household to the academic life.⁴¹ Like Cheke and Thomas, both of whom he knew intimately, he was implicated in the plots and rebellions against Queen Mary and, like Cheke, left

England in 1554 for Italy, reaching Padua in June of 1555.⁴² Thereafter, he journeyed throughout the peninsula as far as Naples, making use of his rank to visit ruling princes, in addition to seeing the sights.

Like Hoby, whom he encountered in Padua, and unlike Cheke, Bedford loved the country. His correspondence from the peninsula is not very revealing, except for one enthusiastic letter to Cecil (ironically) who had been charged with the care of the Earl's property in England and hence was his most regular contact there. Bedford wrote from Ferrara on 24 March 1556 that

[he] has returned here from Rome and Naples. The latter, to his mind, is one of the fairest in Italy, having great commodities by the sea; the buildings are very fair and the country is so fruitful as he has not seen the like. Rome is beautified through the pope's and cardinals' palaces, whereof there is a number passing fair; the antiquities are so many and so worthy to be seen that no small time will suffice to note them all, nor his capacity reach to bear them all away; but such as his wits will serve he shall make Cecil partaker of them at his coming home.⁴³

On his return, Bedford, despite his extreme Protestantism and his later support of the Puritans in Parliament remained something of an *italianato*. His library, for example, contained twelve Italian books, reflecting his affection for that country. Among those Italian works was his former retainer's *Historia di Pietro Bizzarri della guerra fatta in Ungheria* (1569), dedicated to him. Also, there were Italian translations of the classics, religious texts and, interestingly, two editions of Guicciardini, as well as Pietro Ubaldini's *Vita di Carlo Magno*, the first Italian book published in England (1580); and he owned two copies of Tasso's works, including his letters.⁴⁴ His italophilia subsequently served him well in his diplomatic assignments, as witnessed by his performance as Elizabeth's ambassador to France, during which it was remarked that "the Earl hath the Italian tongue very well and the Queen Mother (Catherine de' Medici) hath pleasure in her own tongue."⁴⁵ Evidently, Bedford, like most of the other *italianati* of the middle years of the century continued to promote and advertise his appreciation and knowledge of Italy, despite the growing alienation from the delights of the peninsula. Both perspectives of the schizophrenic English attitude towards Italy had their champions and their influential disciples.

In conclusion, then, let us return to the original question of this mutually exclusive duality in the impressions of Italy exhibited by Englishmen after about 1550. In essence, I have argued that the divergent opinions developed because the Reformation caused

English visitors not to distrust Catholic Italy as much as to judge its civilisation and its people as detached observers, divorced from the universal absolutes of Church and classical antiquity. Some observers found the contemporary Italy of the sixteenth century attractive and worth promoting at home; others found it uncongenial, unwholesome, unEnglish: these spent the remainder of their lives deprecating the peninsula. In short, I am suggesting that the division ultimately came down to a matter of personal taste, perhaps occasioned by particular circumstances, such as the bitterness of exile and poverty in Cheke's case, as well as the effects of the almost fatal illness which he suffered there,⁴⁶ or, the pleasures of sympathetic, polished, aristocratic company and entertainment, elements so significant in both Hoby's and Bedford's accounts of their visits.

Nevertheless, as has been so often observed, the popular, at least literary, characterisation of Italy and Italians declined continuously throughout the second half of the century and throughout the first half of the next. Was it that the Chekes, Aschams, Harrisons and Moorecrofts had more literary influence than the Thomases, Hobys or Bedfords, or later, than the Harringtons or Miltos? To a degree, the answer must be yes, at least for those writers of the sixteenth century. Ascham's *Scholemaste and Hollins-hed's Chronicles* influenced far more Englishmen than even Hoby's *Courtier*; and, what is more important, the former books affected different types of Englishmen. From the beginning — indeed, from the very beginnings with Wyatt and Surrey — the Italianisms of the *inglesi italianati* had been closely associated with the court, with the aristocratic classes. Despite the social origins of Hoby and Thomas, they were seen as what they, in fact, were — courtiers; and it was to such as they that the Italian fashion was most socially and even professionally useful, especially at the court of a Queen who enjoyed nothing more than speaking Italian to visitors from that nation herself.

On the other hand, writers like Cheke and Ascham, despite their intimate connections with the court, were perceived, again correctly, as teachers, scholars, publicists and patriots. Cheke's literary productions consist almost altogether of translations from Greek, with a single hortatory treatise on the need for all Englishmen to obey their King and follow his reformed religion.⁴⁷ Similarly, Ascham, besides the *Scholemaster*, was the author of a book on the particularly English sport of archery, the *Toxophilus*. Such books, when seen with Harrison's immensely popular and influential contributions to *Hollinshed's Chronicles*, spoke directly to the groups

which were increasing in wealth, power and national prestige: the lesser and middle gentry and the urban mercantile classes.

Moreover, the negative impressions of Italy and her people caricatured by Ascham received ever more corroboration by the external political events of the first decades of Elizabeth's reign. In 1570 the pope excommunicated the Queen and called for her deposition by her subjects and by the Catholic powers. Probably more than any other single event this deposition of Elizabeth alienated a great number of patriotic Englishmen from Italy and served to re-establish the connection between Italy and the Anti-Christ which the personalities of the 1530's and 1540's had managed to disrupt. Memories of the Marian reaction and of her Archbishop and cousin, Cardinal Pole, already dramatically revived by the publication of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* seven years before, returned again altered, unjustly, by the passage of time and the change in the continental situation. And, because of these largely political circumstances, the resentment felt by patriotic Englishmen was focussed on Italy. The best example of this comes from Archbishop Parker's *De antiquitate Britannicae ecclesiae* (1572) which characterised Mary's unfortunate cousin, Reginald Pole, thus:

When he had remained there [i.e. Italy] for some months in safety in the very lap and bosom of the pope himself, he emerged infatuated and changed, as if he had drunk the cup of Circe, from an Englishman to an Italian, from a Christian to a papist . . . a great and monstrous metamorphosis contrary to both human and divine nature . . . That simplicity which I think had been in the Englishman originally proper and ingenuous now acquired in the daily contact with the people of Rome their craftiness, still retaining the exterior and feigned appearance of an honest nature, but concealing deep within the heart the cultivated vice of deceit and fraud.⁴⁸

With Parker's analysis of Pole, we are obviously approaching Iago.

Furthermore, it must be remembered that the Queen's deposition and the memory of Pole as *un diavolo incarnato* associated with the martyrdoms of Mary's reign all took place within the hysterical atmosphere occasioned by the discovery of the Ridolfi plot against the Queen. In 1569 and again in 1570 a Florentine banker with the highest connections, Roberto Ridolfi, plotted with the papacy, France and Spain, and powerful English Catholics, such as the Duke of Norfolk, to raise a rebellion against Queen Elizabeth and arrange for the reception of a foreign army into England which would execute the pope's deposition and replace the heretic Elizabeth with the more orthodox Mary Queen of Scots. Because of

the widespread nature of the plot, the implication of some of England's greatest houses, and the closeness of many of the conspirators, including Ridolfi, to the court, the xenophobia just beneath the surface of the English character emerged, disguised as patriotism.

All that Cheke, Ascham, Harrison and their disciples had ever written or believed about Italy appeared to have been proved. The vile caricature of the deceitful Italian of the later Elizabethan and Jacobean stage seemed justly exemplified in Ridolfi, Pope Pius V, and through malicious hindsight, Reginald Pole. Events had shown the Italophobes right, while only the superficialities of fashion and the appeal of art had given any support to the views of the *italianati*.

In the short space of twenty years between the publication of Thomas' *History* and the crises of 1570, the general impression of Italy among Englishmen changed along those lines laid down by the most vituperative of the Italophobes, Cheke and Ascham. Gentlemen may have continued to read Hoby's *Courtier*, and some may have even travelled to the peninsula, in spite of the warnings to avoid the place;⁴⁹ however, the positive image of Italy in the English consciousness had been overwhelmed by the negative and would remain the recessive strain until the fears of Roman Catholicism, external invasion and internal insurrection were calmed.

Thus, again, it was the English who had fundamentally changed and it was the political context of Europe which had shifted. Ridolfi, to be sure, was an Italian, as was the pope; and the Jesuits who ministered to the English recusants with such courage and resourcefulness obeyed instructions from Rome. Also the pressure of Counter-Reformation diplomacy meant that no Venetian ambassador resided at the court of Elizabeth⁵⁰ and that for the first time the academic and religious freedom of the University of Padua was restricted through the imposition of an oath of orthodoxy.⁵¹ However, these things were manifestations of European politics in an age which saw confessional allegiance as a critical element in international affairs; they in no way represented a fundamental transformation in the character of the Italian people.

Consequently, the figures in the plays of the English theatre and the opinions of the English novelists, such as Nashe, indicate much more about the English than about the Italians. A number of polished, cultivated *italianati* continued to honour "the lodging place of *humanitas* and all the arts of civilisation," but their message was overshadowed by the opposite, negative perception which, because of its closer identification with the social and political

circumstances of England in the reign of Elizabeth, came to dominate the popular and the literary imagination. Italy, then, through no fault of its own became the breeding ground of treachery and vice, but, in deference to the sensibilities of the remaining *inglesi italianati*, a place possessed of the fatal charms of Circe, intoxicating simple Englishmen with its beauty, changing them not merely into beasts but into incarnations of the devil himself.

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NOTES

*A version of this paper was delivered in the Italian Lecture Series, St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, 7 Feb. 1980.

- 1 William Thomas, *The History of Italy*, ed. G. B. Parks (Ithaca, 1963), p.3.
- 2 John Milton, *Defensio secunda*, quoted in G. B. Parks, "The Decline and Fall of the English Admiration of Italy," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 32 (1969), 341.
- 3 British Library, Additional MSS. 46367, F.11r.
- 4 Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in *Elizabethan Fiction*, ed. R. Ashley and E. Mosely (New York, 1966), p.284. Nashe continues by observing: "It is now a privy note amongs the better sort of men, when they would set a singular mark or brand on a notorious villain, to say, he hath been in Italy."
- 5 G. B. Parks, *The English Traveler to Italy* (Roma, 1954).
- 6 William Lyly translated *Il libro delle sorte* for More in 1474. The manuscripts, however, seems to have had limited circulation and cannot be said to have begun a renewed interest in Italian vernacular literature. Lyly's translation was essentially a private undertaking for a single individual.
- 7 See W. G. Zeeveld, *Foundations of Tudor Policy* (Cambridge, 1948).
- 8 There were, for example, ten various editions of Castiglione's *Courtier* printed in England during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. See S.T.C. 4778-87. Also, see my "English Students at Padua, 1521-1558," in *Proceedings of the PMR Conference*, forthcoming. Even Nashe noted the courtly skills of the Italians: residence in Italy "Maketh a man an excellent courtier, a curious carpet-knight . . .," *The Unfortunate Traveller*, 284.
- 9 See Parks, "Decline."
- 10 D.N.B., 56, 193, "William Thomas."
- 11 Thomas, p.12
- 12 Thomas, p.11.
- 13 Christina Garrett, *The Marian Exiles* (Cambridge, 1938), p.115.
- 14 *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign*, Mary, 112.
- 15 Girolamo Cardano, *The Book of My Life*, ed. J. Stonor (New York, 1962), p.13. The date for this alleged rectorship was 1526.
- 16 Cardano, p.63. Also see Cardano's collected horoscopes of the Edwardian court, including Cheke's, in *Hieronymi Cardani Mediolanensis Opera Omnia* (Lugduni, 1663), especially *Genitura IV*, Vol.5, 512-3.
- 17 M. Firpo, *Pietro Bizzarri, esule italiano del Cinquecento* (Torino, 1971), p.25.
- 18 Cambridge University Library, MS Mm. 5. 41 no. 12, a letter of Cheke's to Peter Martyr, 10 March 1551. See also, B. L. Lansdowne MSS 980. 163, a letter from Martyr to Bullinger in which the kidnapping of Cheke is described.
- 19 See Richard Morison, *A Remedy for Sedition* (London, 1536), S.T.C. 20877.
- 20 *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign*, Mary, 112.
- 21 Public Records Office, SP 69/4 no. 240, 22 July 1554.
- 22 British Library, Additional MSS 46367, f.11r.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., f.11v.

26 J. Hebel, H. Hudson, et al. eds., *Tudor Poetry and Prose* (New York, 1953), p.680.

27 R. Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, ed. J. B. Mayor (London, 1863), p.82.

28 Ascham, p.85

29 William Harrison, "A Description of England," in *Holinshed's Chronicles* (1577), in *Chronicle and Romance*, ed. C. W. Eliot (New York, 1910), pp.398-9. See also p.235.

30 When Cecil wished to send his son, Thomas (Cheke's nephew), out of England to be educated in civil law and in the French and Italian tongues, he preferred to send him to France because the state of religion was better there. See *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign*, Elizabeth, IV, 104-5, 8 May 1561. Cf. G. Parks, "The First Italianate Englishmen," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 8 (1961), 206-7.

31 *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign*, Elizabeth, VIII, no. 879, 1 January 1567.

32 Ibid.

33 Printed in Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke, ed., *Miscellaneous State Papers From 1501-1726* (London, 1778).

34 Yorke, I, 99.

35 Thomas (1530-1566) was the half-brother of Sir Philip Hoby, the celebrated courtier and diplomat of Henry VIII and Edward VI.

36 Thomas Hoby, *A Book of the Travail and Lief of Me Thomas Hoby*, ed. E. Powell (London, 1902), pp.36-37.

37 Hoby, pp.36-37.

38 Hoby, pp.53-4, for example.

39 Hoby, p.19.

40 Hoby, p.28.

41 Firpo, p.31.

42 Hoby, p.120.

43 *Calendar of State Papers, Foreign*, Mary, 219.

44 M. St. Clare Byrne and G. Scott Thomson, "My Lord's Books: The Library of Francis, Second Earl of Bedford in 1584," *The Review of English Studies*, 7 (1931), 385-405.

45 Byrne and Thomson, p.394

46 Public Records Office, SP 69/5, 5 November 1554.

47 Sir John Cheke, *The Hurt of Sedition* (London, 1549), S.T.C. 5109.

48 Quoted in Parks, "The First . . .," 213.

49 English enrolment at the University of Padua continued throughout the century. See I.A. Andrich, *De natione anglica et scota iuristarum universitatis patavinae* (Padua, 1892), pp. 131-3.

50 L. Firpo, ed., *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al senato*, I, Inghilterra (Torino, 1965), xvii.

51 The oath of orthodoxy was required after 1564. Previously there had been a great deal of religious freedom. See L. Rossetti, *L'Università di Padova: Profilo storico* (Milan, 1972), p.18; cf. B. Brugi, *Gli scolari dello studio di Padova nel Cinquecento* (Padova, 1905), p.42: "A Padova mite il vescovo per i tedeschi, di buone maniere l'inquisitore."

Individual Ages in Manzoni's Conception of History

In any theory of history as progress it is difficult not to conceive of each individual age or generation as a mere instrument or stepping stone in itself. There is also a tendency to consider only those elements in an age that contributed to progress and consequently to neglect the conditions, both material and spiritual, of the human beings who lived out their lives therein. On the other hand, the melancholy or despair engendered by the inevitable passage of time and by the transience of all things in an endless sequence of generations has found consolation in religion, whether through worship of ancestors in an unchanging primitive society or through a transcendental god in an eternity into which men would pass after death. Homer could compare the generation of men to that of leaves: both die, but another generation of each is born.¹ Later writers, however, contrasted the constant rebirth of nature with the final death of the individual. In modern times, as J. H. Plumb has pointed out,² the growth of technological change has meant that work skills and patterns can no longer be learned at home from one generation to the next: the links between generations have been loosened, since only the present can have the validity, the hold of the past has weakened and thus also, we might suggest, the interest in past ages. More recently, the uncertainty and constant change in the present have perhaps contributed to a renewed interest in the past, whether in a quest for roots or in a desire to investigate human emotions and problems, as exemplified in historical novels or romanticized biographies — a return, in part, to the Romantic position of the earlier nineteenth century.

In the second part of his *Discorso sopra alcuni punti della storia longobardica in Italia*,³ Manzoni identifies the originality of Giambattista Vico's contribution to historical interpretation, while lamenting:

E seguendo il Vico nelle ardite e troppo spesso ipotetiche sue classificazioni, come si vorrebbe andar sempre avanti con la guida di fatti sufficienti all'assunto, e severamente discussi! (p.43)

Manzoni had just previously commended Muratori for his concentration on facts but had speculated on the great effect which would be produced by a union of his method with that of Vico. For the latter, history represents human progress, the perpetual creation by man of himself and his world, the realization of his potentialities, in an ordered development as Providence operates through man's own capacities. For Vico, however, unlike some Enlightenment thinkers, each age is of value and its individual characteristics can be identified and understood by subsequent generations through the imagination, the *fantasia*, which generates our sense of the past, no matter how different its culture, thought, patterns and means of expression may be, governed, as they were, by its distinctive historical context. Human nature is not unchanging but is in constant development.⁴

The men of the Enlightenment tended to look at past ages from their own assured rational viewpoint, which they considered as final and absolute. In history, they sought the struggle of reason against the forces hindering its progress. It was generally held that not all ages could be justified as equally necessary in the course of human progress. The eighteenth century was obviously the highest point yet reached, not least because its thinkers were aware of the power of reason and its role in history and through this awareness, were in a position to accelerate its advance to an eventual state of social peace and happiness. The formulation of a precise doctrine of progress followed naturally and reached its height in Condorcet, who traced the continuous progress of the human race up to the coming tenth epoch. Unlike Vico, David Hume considered the principles of human nature to be constant and universal and the purpose of historiography is to illustrate and clarify them.⁵ Since reason and natural order are always the same, added Turgot, the historian should strip away the accidents of period and place in order to reveal the universal principles of human nature: each historical age is inseparably linked to its predecessors by an unbreakable chain of cause and effect.⁶

In other ways, however, some philosophical historians of the Enlightenment expressed viewpoints which are usually considered typical of the Romantics. Though Montesquieu expected that the advancement of knowledge would bring a new moral order and a new orientation of the political and social history of man,⁷ he could also say that carrying over into remote centuries all the ideas of the century in which we live is one of the most fertile sources of error, a point echoed by Manzoni in the *Discorso sopra alcuni punti della storia longobardica in Italia*: "Queste poche parole d'uno scrittore sì diligente e sì sagace, possono servire per un esempio insigne

di quel costume tanto comune a molti storici di pigliare le convenzioni moderne per misura a giudicare i fatti accaduti in tempi, in cui queste convenzioni non si sognavano nemmeno," where the writer in question is Muratori. Montesquieu also anticipated a typical Romantic outlook in his statement that, when he came to speak of ancient history, he tried to assume the spirit of antiquity and to become an ancient himself.⁸ In his *Essai sur les Moeurs et l'Esprit des Nations*, Voltaire said that he would have liked to know the kind of family in existence in a given age, how people lived within their families and what arts were practised — an interest, that is, not in general history, but in the individual,⁹ a need later echoed by Condorcet.¹⁰ Voltaire also asserted that only those who have written tragedies can cast some interest into history since they know how to paint and arouse passions: from his composition of plays derived his method of writing history, this method "d'encadrer et d'isoler chaque partie de l'histoire générale" being identical with the procedure of a playwright "qui encadre un fait historique pour en composer une tragédie."¹¹ The metaphor of painting was frequent among historical novelists of the early nineteenth century, including Manzoni, as was the use of the concept of "spettacolo" for the individual scenes of a novel.

In Germany, Herder maintained that each historical age and each people, as well as each age of the individual, has its centre of happiness in itself and we must not judge earlier people or their ethics by the standards of other times; every human achievement is conditioned by the time and place and by the circumstances and stream of conditions that press in upon people involved in a situation. Happiness, which is the goal of human life, can be realized in each stage of human history, since it is an inner condition of the human mind and spirit. Nature created a vast variety of forms of human existence so as to bestow upon each man the appropriate measure of satisfaction in his time and situation. Herder called on historians to "enter into the age, into the region, into the whole of history, feel yourself into everything."¹² He also wrote "Nothing in the whole kingdom of God is . . . a means only . . . everything is means and end at the same time, and certainly also these centuries."¹³ Pietro Verri had asked whether it was right and reasonable to hazard the repose and safety of a living generation, which has a present right to a good existence, for the uncertain hope of obtaining tranquillity for generations still to be born, and the abate Ferdinando Galiani asserted: "Il ne doit être question que du bonheur des êtres réels, des individus existants ou prévus. Nous et nos enfants, voilà tout. Le rest est rêveerie."¹⁴ Justus

von Möser spoke of the need for an "Einleben und Einfühlen in die Dinge."¹⁵

In his youth, Manzoni accepted the eighteenth century and Jacobin confidence in the establishment of peace and justice, as we see in the poem *Il Trionfo della Libertà* of 1801, where he contemplates history in general terms as something "astratta e mitizzata secondo i modelli del razionalismo,"¹⁶ identifying obstacles which have impeded the development of liberty. His disillusionment with the actual conditions in the Cisalpine Republic¹⁷ caused Manzoni to stand outside society in various poems in the following years — *Alla sua donna, Frammento di un'ode alle Muse* and the *Sermoni* — and to style himself the "giusto solitario" in the *carme In morte di Carlo Imbonati*, who could thus maintain his own purity and the lofty mission of his poetry. The conversion of 1810 not only provided a basis for his moral feeling but also led him to contemplate the position of the individual as such and then his place in society which, as a historical phenomenon, partook of the "vero" which we can find only in history. If the "vero storico," coupled with the "vero morale" was the only subject worthy of our attention, it followed that every manifestation of the "vero" was interesting and that no age or generation could be neglected, an idea which was later to be confirmed for Manzoni by the theory and practice of French Romantic historians.

The *Inni Sacri*, rather than the tragedies, mark Manzoni's first excursion into history. He describes, even narrates, the events of Christ's life in a past historical age, but, since these events were both temporal and eternal as reflecting the dual nature of Christ on earth, he shows the link between temporal and eternal at each moment and in each age through the power of Church ritual to renew these events and their enduring significance. In the religious sense, therefore, every moment and every age was of equal value and this value derived, not from any role in historical process, but vertically from the eternal. In a letter to Auguste Stolberg of 17 April 1823, Goethe spoke of the eternal present in every moment and remarked to Eckermann on 3 November 1823 that every situation indeed every moment is of enduring value since it is the representative of eternity. As Leopold von Ranke was to say, each generation stands equidistant from eternity and each is an end in itself, an idea carried on in this century by the eschatology of Karl Barth. The contrast with Hegel's position is quite clear: for him, history is a becoming, the development of the spirit in time: everything can only appear as it does and when it does it is merely instrumental since it is only a passing movement in our passage to the Absolute.

Manzoni re-evokes the historical moments of Christ's life. As Ulivi remarks of *La Pentecoste*: "il Cristo che sale al cielo. . . è un'evocazione reale" and "è il romantico richiamo di un gran giorno, di un evento irrepetibile consumato per sempre," the sublime nostalgia for an hour relating to all humanity.¹⁸ In *I Promessi Sposi*, Manzoni would deal with the state of a society in a given age, including each social class: an earnest of this is found in *La Pentecoste*, as Barberi Squarotti observes, "La rassegna totale dell'umanità si svolge sotto il segno della definitiva costrizione, che stabilisce l'esatta determinazione di ogni età, stato del sentimento, condizione economica, entro la visione della perfezione assoluta, equilibrata, in un esatto calcolo di misura regolata, dominata, negato a ogni eccesso, a ogni ventura, a ogni slancio. . . "¹⁹ Manzoni contemplates the whole of society in any moment. It must be added, however, that, as in *I Promessi Sposi*, he penetrates to the life of the individual and to his moral responsibilities.²⁰

The question at issue in the two tragedies is whether the two ages in which they are set are individualized or whether, beyond their purely contingent characteristics, they are simply representative of all ages or of constantly recurring ages in which injustice is predominant. The *Inni Sacri* had recalled a time and events that were unique. Again, are the principal characters universal types, or figures typical of nineteenth-century Romanticism, or historically determined while conveying a general statement about life? In his letter of 7 February 1820 to Gaetano Giudici regarding *Il conte di Carmagnola*, Manzoni speaks of a specific character and age and asks whether:

Un uomo di animo forte ed elevato e desideroso di grandi imprese, che si dibatte colla debolezza e colla perfidia de' suoi tempi, e con istituzioni misere, improvide, irragionevoli, ma astute e già fortificate dall'abitudine e dal rispetto, e dagli interessi di quelli che hanno l'iniziativa della forza, è egli un personaggio drammatico?²¹

a well defined character, that is, living in any age with recognizable characteristics. Manzoni goes on to identify two types of interest experienced by the spectator of a drama: that which arises from our seeing men and things presented in conformity with that type of perfection and desire which we all have within us; and, secondly, the presentation of that mixture "di grande meschino, di ragionevole e di pazzo che si vede negli avvenimenti grandi e piccioli di questo mondo." He had used these two methods of generating emotion and reflection, one in the tragedy itself, the

other in the chorus. It seems to me that Manzoni has not individualized a given age, in this case the fifteenth century in Italy, but has presented a general and recurring situation — the just man who falls victim to the inevitable injustice of political life, governed as it is by considerations of self-interest, a situation dear to the Romantics. A general characterization of the age is lacking and the comments of ordinary Venetians to Carmagnola's father which were included in the first version have been removed. Apart from the relationship between the temporal and the eternal — the latter a mere escape from and a negation of the former — *Il conte di Carmagnola* is of interest for its investigation of the reaction of the individual to historical situations: "il poeta del sistema romantico shakesperiano è chiamato per l'appunto a ricostruire quell'uomo interiore che il passato lascia inabissare sotto gli eventi," as Ezio Raimondi puts it,²² but, in the case of Carmagnola himself, his thoughts relate in the end not to history or his age as such but to his own relationship with the eternal. The chorus, however, comments from a historical viewpoint on the evil of civil war, with its implied plea for united action by the Italians of Manzoni's own day.

Adelchi is at first the victim of a historical situation produced by the actions of his father, Desiderio, in threatening the territory of the Pope, but this situation is later generalized within a wider historical process. The peculiar characteristics of his age are never specified, nor are the motives and actions of Carlo, of Desiderio and of the rebellious Lombard nobles in any way limited to their age. Carlo ably takes advantage of Lombard disunity and of the Pope's call for assistance but he is the eternal Machiavellian politician who is in no way formed or conditioned by his age, though his precise actions are governed by historical circumstances, since he lacks any spiritual dimension.²³ The chorus "Dagli atrii muscosi" makes it clear that the Frankish supplanting of the Lombards as masters of the subject Italians is part of a series, a historical action, but not possessed of special features. The series included, centuries later, the events of 1796 to 1821.²⁴ Ulivi speaks of the "succedersi triste delle generazioni."²⁵

Ermengarda, too, is a victim, rejected by her husband Carlo for political reasons; but again, her position is not unique: "Altre infelici dormono,/Che il duol consunse. . . ." The impression, says Sansone, "è il succedersi delle cose."²⁶ She is less an individual in a historical sense than a person "dalla rea progenie/Degli oppressor discesa" and placed by "la provida sventura" among the oppressed. This same circumstance is later adduced by Adelchi (V.8) in his words to Desiderio:

Una feroce

Forza il mondo possiede, e fa nomarsi
 Dritto: la man degli avi insanguinata
 Seminò l'ingiustizia; i padri l'hanno
 Coltivata col sangue; e omai la terra
 Altra messe non dà.

In the *Adelchi* there is one episode, a "hic et nunc scenico," to quote Lonardi, in which are foreshadowed similar situations and narrative devices in *I Promessi Sposi*.²⁷ I refer to Martino's account of his journey across the mountains. The journey is recreated for the reader who almost accompanies Martino, through the frequent use of verbs of "seeing."²⁸

The autonomy of "generations" emerges clearly in the *Osservazioni sulla morale cattolica* of 1819, though the concept does not go beyond the moral or narrowly cultural, as is inevitable in this context. The *Osservazioni* deal essentially with the position of the individual in general with little regard for his place in specific historical situations: it is the unvarying context of life and death, of time and relationship to the eternal. "Tutto ciò che non è preparazione alla vita futura, tutto ciò che ci può far dimenticare che siamo in cammino, tutto ciò che prendiamo per dimora stabile, è varietà ed errore."²⁹ In *I Promessi Sposi*, such a position will be integrated into concrete history, precisely because of the essential importance of this life in determining our position in the next life: but the *Osservazioni* can be regarded as a necessary preliminary for the dramatization of moral questions in specific historical situations.

In the first chapter of the second part of the *Osservazioni*, Manzoni discusses the opposition between religion and the "spirito del secolo." "The spirit of the age," or of the time, was a favourite topic in that period. William Hazlitt's book entitled *The Spirit of the Age*, came out in 1825, but the topic is there treated rather differently.³⁰ Manzoni is contrasting the unchanging position of the Church with the varying viewpoints held in succeeding ages or simply with a purely worldly position which cannot have any enduring value. The dominant ideas in a given age may degenerate into a "tirannia di opinione" (p.491). Each "secolo," says Manzoni in the ninth Fragment (p.563), has certain leading opinions which constitute its "spirit" and which, after the invention of printing, derive from a few thinkers of the previous generation since, when they are first put forward, these opinions are commonly either denied or completely neglected, an observation repeated in *Pensiero XV*. The truths to which they penetrated may be inevitable in that they would be discovered even by

mediocre minds through the "progresso naturale delle cognizioni." Elsewhere (p.536), Manzoni states that "il tempo e il progresso dei lumi hanno distrutte istituzioni orribilmente ingiuste, ma che nello stesso tempo erano mezzi di conservare la società: tale è la schiavitù degli antichi" and "lo stesso progresso di lumi rendeva impossibile la durata delle assurde religioni esistenti" (p.537). In the *Lettera sul romanticismo* of 1823, he refers to the "progresso naturale delle scienze economiche."³¹ Nowhere, that is, does he deny the advance of knowledge and Reason (which he prefers to capitalize). A generation can be strongly convinced of the rightness of its thought and yet be mistaken: thus it is not surprising that the principles of religion are opposed to the spirit of such a generation. One age may proclaim a false principle and deplore the blindness of its ancestors in adhering to the opposite extreme and yet, while enumerating the circumstances that had produced such a gross error, fail to discern that similar circumstances have led to the opposite error and to its continuation. Manzoni identifies some basic ideas and institutions of certain ages which had been superseded, such as the spirit of chivalry, that is, the concept of "honour," and slavery. If someone in the "bei tempi" of the Romans had described war as cruel madness, how would he have been received? Would any reply have been deemed necessary to a contention that the helots had the same rights in regard to freedom and law as the Spartans themselves?

In 1819-20, Manzoni was in Paris where he came to know two historian friends of Fauriel — Augustin Thierry and François Guizot. In the *Censeur Européen* in 1817, Thierry had said that, despite the apparent changes in history, the lot of the people, of "les sujets," of the defeated, remained constant. In the same journal two years later, he affirmed that the conditions of the present are best understood by looking at the past, of which a "peinture vive et fidèle" is needed. Painting a picture of an age is synonymous with bringing it back to life and the term "colouring" signifies the animation of bare facts. Thierry repeats his interest in, and sympathy for, the humble who are the most numerous part of a nation and yet are forgotten.³² In the preface of 1834 to his *Dix ans d'études historiques*, he recalls his projected reform of around 1820, declaring war "aux écrivains sans érudition qui n'ont pas su voir, et aux écrivains sans imagination qui n'ont pas su peindre."³³ In *Waverley*, a novel well known to Manzoni, Scott says of the hero that he loved to fill up and round the sketch with the colouring of a warm and vivid imagination, which gives light and life to the actors and speakers in the drama of past ages. It was Thierry who spoke of the tragedy of the generations that had passed over the

earth leaving no trace of themselves: "Il faut pénétrer jusqu'aux hommes, à travers l'espace des temps; il faut se les représenter vivant et agissant sur le sol où la poussière de leurs os ne se trouverait pas aujourd'hui."³⁴ Finally, he believed, like Manzoni, that the novel can contain the truest part of history, essential for the recreation of an individual age.

The *Lettre à M. Chauvet* of early 1820 speaks not of the novel, but of dramatic poetry: "Expliquer ce que les hommes ont senti, voulu et souffert, par ce qu'ils ont fait, voilà la poésie dramatique."³⁵ The essential point is the recovery of men's inner life, worked out from the events in a detached and self-contained portion of history: the poet fills out this portion of history and shows its moral effect. Although Manzoni uses the term "le caractère propre des hommes et de l'époque que je veux peindre" (p.373), he is less interested in the features of an individual age than in the psychological and spiritual life of its prominent figures as an index of general human life and for its salutary moral effect on the reader or spectator.

The *Discorso sopra alcuni punti della storia longobardica in Italia*, begun in autumn 1820 and published in 1822, is far closer in many respects to the position of Thierry. The concept of an individual epoch with its own characteristics is now fully accepted and stressed. History consists not of material and external facts nor are these sufficient to form the dramatic concept of a historical event:

Le circostanze di leggi, di consuetudini, di opinioni, in cui si sono trovati i personaggi operanti; le intenzioni e le tendenze loro; la giustizia, o l'ingiustizia di esse, indipendentemente dalle convenzioni umane, secondo o contra le quali è stato operato; i desiderj, i timori, i patimenti, lo stato generale dell'immenso numero d'uomini che non ebbero parte attiva negli avvenimenti, ma che ne provarono gli effetti.³⁶

There is the usual Manzonian admixture of the historical and the moral which brought on him the condemnation of Croce. Yet Manzoni insists that subsequent generations must study earlier ones in themselves and not lose sight of their true character:

è questo un altro esempio di quel costume quasi generale presso i moderni di tirare le cose antiche alla misura dei loro tempi, e di toglier così ad esse ciò che hanno di più caratteristico e di più istruttivo. (p.223)

Similarly we think that men invested with power in history held it for a purpose that is for us "il solo ragionevole ed onesto" (p.297). It is a curious way of observing history:

di prendere per misura a giudicare una serie di fatti, gli interessi della posterità, e non quelli della generazione che ha subito quei fatti: come se

alcuno potesse prevedere con qualche certezza lo stato che a lungo andare sarebbe risultato da fatti diversi. E, quando pur si potesse, non sarebbe tuttavia né ragionevole né umano il considerare una generazione puramente come un mezzo di quelle che le succedettero. (p.245)³⁷

A generation, like an individual man, lives its own autonomous life and cannot be a mere instrument of other generations, as though its people were in some way incomplete. Each generation will certainly benefit from the efforts of the past but must live by its own efforts and regard its inheritance as something to be expanded rather than lived upon in idleness.

Up to this point, Manzoni has concentrated upon the individual's feelings, thoughts and problems with some general statements on the intellectual climate of the age and references to the condition of the humble. Now, certainly using the example of Sir Walter Scott as his starting point, he carries the process much further. He described approvingly to Fauriel in a letter of 29 January 1821 Tommaso Grossi's intention in the narrative poem *I Lombardi alla prima crociata*: "Son intention est de peindre une époque par le moyen d'une fable de son invention, à-peu-près comme dans *Ivanhoe*."³⁸ Manzoni refers to "ce système d'invention des faits pour développer des moeurs historiques." Grossi will gather together "les traits caractéristiques d'une époque de la société." Manzoni's point of arrival is seen in the famous letter to Fauriel of 3 November 1821, in which appears explicitly the idea of describing a past age in its total extent and depth. Manzoni says that he conceives of the historical novel as a representation of a given state of society by means of actions and characters so similar to reality that they could be considered a true history which had just been discovered. Clearly, "state of society" must include the conditions, both material and spiritual, of all social classes, including social attitudes. Manzoni told Fauriel on 29 May 1822 that he was doing what he could to penetrate himself with the spirit of the time in order to live in it and mentions arbitrary government, feudal and popular anarchy, astonishing legislation, profound ignorance, hostile classes and a plague in which were shown consummate crime, absurd prejudices and the most touching virtues. In August 1823, he wrote that he had tried to discover, know exactly and paint faithfully the age and the country in which he had placed his history. Though this must mean that he wishes to understand the viewpoints of the age, he will obviously not judge events and characters by such standards. It is interesting to note that, in the preface of his novel *Julia Severa*, the Swiss historian Sismondo de' Sismondi (Manzoni's adversary in the *Osservazioni*

sulla morale cattolica) said that the historian is, as it were, obliged to live in the age he describes, but that such continued labour cannot be expected in the mere novelist; he wished in his novel to describe the ancient state of society such as it was, at least such as we must conceive it was, with all its virtues and vices.³⁹

Scott, observes Karl Kroeber, made it possible to describe any society in its temporal dimensions, whereas, before him, social organization had remained static in novels. He presented society as the product of past experiences and traditions which are in the process of becoming something different.⁴⁰ Thus his novels of the recent past — his first nine dealt with the 17th or 18th centuries — make of this recent past a preparation for the present, though the past does not lose its intrinsic value. He chooses ages that mark a turning point, for example the supersession of Scottish chivalrous patriotism as represented by the Highlanders in the rebellion of 1745 in *Waverley*, Anglo-Saxon against Norman, Royalist against Puritan and so on, but establishes a dynamic relationship between characters and historical conditions and development. He tends to look at history through character and at character through the history that had worked upon it,⁴¹ while affirming that the passions are generally the same in all ranks and conditions, all countries and ages and that the opinions, habits of thinking and actions, however influenced by the peculiar state of society, must still, upon the whole, bear a strong resemblance to each other.⁴² He establishes, however, the historical peculiarity of an age and its psychology and ways of thinking. The description of customs and ways of life of various classes are essential elements in the overall picture and should not be considered mere local colour. Scott's moderate attitudes and his feeling for ordinary life suppressed the tragic note in most of his novels and brought the reader from heroic ideals back to ordinary humanity.⁴³

Fermo e Lucia realized Manzoni's ideal only in part and the frequent emphasis on the special characteristics of the early 17th century in Lombardy as opposed to his own times are perhaps indicative of a realization that these characteristics had not been absorbed artistically into the story and into the representation of the characters and also of a failure to understand the age in itself. He refers to "quei tempi di funesta memoria" (p. 160);⁴⁴ of Geltrude "le sue parole e il suo contegno sarebbero state uno scandalo insopportabile in un secolo meno bestiale di quello" (p.225); "perchè a quei tempi tante cagioni favorivano la scelleratezza, che in coloro i quali vi si distinguevano, ella giungeva ad un segno del quale grazie a Dio, non si può avere una idea dalla esperienza comune del vivere presente" (p.209); when Lucia was in Milan,

“Agnese si rassegnava all’idea di esser lontana da sua figlia, come ai nostri giorni farebbe una madre della condizione di Agnese, che avesse una figlia collocata in Inghilterra” (p.509). At one point, Manzoni indulges in a lengthy discussion regarding different ideas in different times and generations, ideas which are held to be true. We may feel self-satisfaction when we look at the times described in the novel, but what will the future think of us? Certain ideas are dominant for one, two or more generations and a very curious history could be written about ideas that have reigned for a certain time and then fallen away (pp.560-64). Finally, Manzoni has a criticism of historians and an implicit statement of his own aims: of Padre Felice Casati, the head of the Capuchins in the *lazzaretto*, he says “Fra quel nobile volgo si distinse un uomo che avrebbe un nome storico, se la storia fosse consecrata a descrivere lo stato delle società nei diversi tempi, e a segnalare i fatti e i caratteri che più servono a far conoscere la natura umana” (p.568).

In *I Promessi Sposi*, Manzoni’s treatment of the age differs from that of Scott. The latter presented an age that was dynamic rather than static, which included concrete individuals and historical forces and had its own human value but which was still part of a political and social process. As Bruno Stagnitto remarks, Manzoni brings back these individual historical actions to their immediately verifiable character, to their contemporary significance in individual or mass suffering: Stagnitto cites as an example Manzoni’s observations on the siege of Casale.⁴⁵ Salvatorelli comments that the lot of a people at a given moment takes precedence over political and national criteria.⁴⁶ Manzoni does not present a struggle between Italians and Spaniards, but conditions within a society and its reactions at various levels to external circumstances — famine, war, plague: a static picture or, at most, a moving picture within the confines of a definite frame. Yet this assessment is not complete if the final position of Renzo and Lucia is taken into account. It is true that the author attributes to them on the final page “il sugo della storia,” which is a judgment of their adventures and misfortunes in regard to universal human life and to God and the next life, a judgement in harmony with the Christian moral tone to which individual actions have been related earlier; but, as various critics have pointed out, the couple’s move from their village to Bergamo represents their progress from a feudal condition to an incipient capitalism with Renzo an employer of labour in a spinning mill, which is also indicative of the general movement from feudalism to capitalism.

Lukács maintains that the absence of a world-historical atmosphere "manifests itself in Manzoni in a certain limitedness of human horizon on the part of his characters. . . . Compared with the heroic drama of Scott's Jeanie Deans or Rebecca, the fate of Lucia is really no more than an externally menaced idyll, while an inevitable pettiness attaches to the negative characters of the novel: their negativity is unable to reveal dialectically the historical limits of the whole period and therewith also the limits of the passive figures, as does, for example, that of the Knight Templar in *Ivanhoe*."⁴⁷ In fact, a marriage between two *contadini* can scarcely be called an idyll. The external menace from Don Rodrigo exemplifies both the feudal system and its accompanying code of "honour" and their effect, while the reactions of Renzo and Lucia illustrate the limits inevitably imposed upon their class. The weakness of law enforcement when the powerful are involved is also shown, with creatures of the law such as Azzeccagarbugli conforming to the situation. The famine, the war and the plague bring out the incompetence of foreign rule based on the local aristocracy. There is, of course, no indication of any future change in the system and, in this sense, Lukács' criticism is correct — if an indication of future change is, in fact, inherent in every age at every time.

The turning point in the novel is the conversion of the Innominato, which was based upon a historical event. Since for Manzoni there are two kinds of "vero," the "vero storico" and "vero morale," both must inevitably enter his portrayal of a historical age; he thus tends to isolate the age, without a horizontal relationship in a historical sense, but with constant vertical reference to the eternal which lies behind every moment of human existence. While the father of Gertrude is totally enclosed within his time and his actions are explicable only in its terms, the Innominato must stand outside the age for a moment in order to return to it, repentant, and to live the rest of his life actively within it. Clearly, changes can be effected if enough persons in powerful positions undergo such a conversion, but Manzoni gives no other indication of change within that age.

After the estrangement from their age of Carmagnola and Adelchi, with the Romantic solution of death and tranquillity as the only escape, Manzoni has now realized that no escape is possible, that each man belongs to his age, must live his life and make decisions in *that* age and in those conditions. Don Abbondio with his system of neutrality sought to contract out of his age and thus of the only possible context of his life, and was bound to fail.⁴⁸ In a far different sense, the Innominato's life acquired meaning for him only when he returned to the community.

Manzoni had told Fauriel that he was endeavouring to penetrate the spirit of the time in order to live in it. It may be suggested that he went even further and imagined himself present at certain scenes. His technique of having a character walk through the streets during certain broader events or in a continuing situation is significant: his full consciousness of this technique is shown by his joking about it in *Fermo e Lucia*. Renzo enters Milan and advances through strange conditions before becoming involved in the food riots; the process is repeated during the plague, while an observer is implicitly present to see conditions engendered by the famine. On each occasion, the author intervenes to describe what his character saw — and the verb of seeing is used frequently. The same immediacy is evident in various other scenes such as the meeting of Don Abbondio and the *bravi* or between Borromeo and the Innominato: in these the author's close observation of gestures and expressions enhances the effect. Manzoni termed some of his scenes "ritratti" and "spettacoli." It is hardly surprising that a number of scenes from the novel, as with the Waverley novels of Scott — who felt that a pictorial or scenic quality was essential at moments of intensity in the action of the novel⁴⁹ — became the subjects of painters and illustrators.

In the last analysis, for Manzoni every age is of equal importance because it is composed of human beings who are equal before God.⁵⁰ History, composed of ages or generations, can be compared with the autonomous moments, each of equal value, of the individual human life.

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NOTES

1 *Iliad* VI, 147ff.

2 *The Death of the Past* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 48-49.

3 In *Tutte le opere*, a cura di Alberto Chiari e Fausto Ghisalberti, IV (Milano, 1963), 40-43.

4 Cf. Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder. Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London, 1976), pp. 34 ff. and 112.

5 Ralph G. Wilburn, *The Historical Shape of Faith* (Philadelphia, 1966), p. 58.

6 *Oeuvres*, ed. Gustave Schelle (Paris, 1913), I, 277; see also Frank E. Manuel, *Shapes of Philosophical History* (Stanford, 1965), p. 98 ff. For the typical position of Italian historians of the Enlightenment, see Nicola Abbagnano, "Il concetto della storia nell'illuminismo italiano," *Rivista di filosofia*, 56 (1965), 291.

7 See Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz L. A. Koelln and James P. Petegrove (Boston, 1955), p. 214.

8 *De l'Esprit des Lois*, Livre XXX, ch. XIV (Paris, 1949), II, 314 and Cassirer, p. 215.

For the quotation from the *Discorso*, see *Tutte le opere*, IV, 187. Bettinelli had stated "Dunque chi vuol giustamente sentenziar Dante si dee trasportare in Toscana e in Italia tra le turbolenze e l'ignoranza di quei giorni." See the eighth

of his *Lettere inglesi in Lettere virgiliane, Lettere inglesi e Mia vita letteraria*, a cura di Gilberto Finzi (Milano, 1962), p.166.

9 Quoted by Sidney Pollard, *The Idea of Progress. History and Society* (Harmondsworth, 1971), p.34.

10 Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Human Mind, trans. June Barraclough (London, 1955), p.170.

11 See the Introduction by René Pomeau, p. Ixiii, to *Essai sur les Moeurs* (Paris, 1963).

12 Roy Pascal, *The German Sturm und Drang* (Manchester, 1953), p.226; Robert T. Clark, Jr. *Herder: His Life and Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969), pp.191, 194, et passim; René Wellek, *The Later Eighteenth Century*, Vol. I of *A History of Modern Criticism* (New Haven and London, 1955), p.185.

13 See Wellek, p.185. The passage is quoted from *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774). Kant criticized Herder for this position in his *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* of 1784.

14 For Verri, see Luigi Salvatorelli, *Il pensiero politico italiano dal 1700 al 1870*, 4th ed. (Torino, 1943), p.62, n.1; for Galiani, see F. Nicolini, *Il pensiero politico dell'abate Galiani* (Bari, 1909), p.151: this passage is also quoted by Augusto Simonini, *L'ideologia di Alessandro Manzoni* (Ravenna, 1978), p.112, n.16.

15 See Pollard, p.39.

16 Ferruccio Ulivi, *Il Manzoni lirico e la poetica del Rinnovamento* (Roma, 1950), p.66; cf. Pietro Mazzamuto, *Poetica e stile in Alessandro Manzoni* (Firenze, 1957), p.210.

17 He refers to "le spectacle affreux de la corruption de mon pays" in a letter to Claude Fauriel of 19 March 1807: see *Lettere*, a cura di Cesare Arieti, Volume VII, Tomo I of *Tutte le opere* (Milano, 1970), p.34.

18 Op. cit., p.125. Filippo Piemontese commented: "Poesia storica è dunque sostanzialmente la poesia degli *Inni Sacri*," in *Studi sul Manzoni e altri saggi* (Milano, 1952), p.39.

19 *Teoria e prove dello stile del Manzoni* (Milano, 1965), p.45. In *La Passione*, Ulivi, p.61, sees "un più diffuso tessuto narrativo. Da qui si può prevedere ormai non lungo il cammino al pathos della vita quotidiana e della situazione storica." Goffis finds that the real novelty of these experiments in the sacred lyric lies in the indication of "la possibilità di un tono narrativo," in *La lirica di Alessandro Manzoni* (Firenze, 1964), p.146.

20 Cf. Ezio Raimondi's observations in *Il romanzo senza idillio. Saggio sui Promessi Sposi* (Torino, 1974), p.62.

21 *Lettere*, I, 193-94.

22 Op. cit., p.65.

23 Piemontese, p.109, maintained that Carlo derived his attitudes, ambitions and *forma mentis* from his time.

24 Cf. Goffis, p.233.

25 Op. cit., p.90.

26 M. Sansone, *L'opera poetica di Alessandro Manzoni* (Milano-Messina, 1947), p.175. Aurelia Accame Bobbio, *Il cristianesimo manzoniano tra storia e poesia* (Roma, 1954), p.42, thinks that what attracted Manzoni most in the year 1820 was the desire to understand and express what the fall of the Lombard Kingdom had meant in the history of the Italian people. See also her *Alessandro Manzoni. Segno di contraddizione* (Roma, 1975), pp.171-72.

27 Gilberto Lonardi, *L'esperienza stilistica del Manzoni tragico* (Firenze, 1965), p.39.

28 In any discussion of the *Adelchi*, we must recall Manzoni's own unhappiness with the character of Adelchi: "tutto il carattere in somma è inventato di pianta, e intruso tra i caratteri storici, con un'infelicità, che dal più difficile e dal più malevolo lettore non sarà, certo, così vivamente sentita come lo è dall'autore." See *Poesie e tragedie*, Vol. I of *Tutte le opere* (Milano, 1957), p.551. For the question, see Manzoni's letter to Goethe of 23 January 1822 in *Lettere*, I, 223.

29 *Opere morali e filosofiche*, Vol. III of *Tutte le opere*, p.508.

30 Cf. M. H. Abrams, "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age," in *Romanticism Reconsidered: Selected Papers from the English Institute*, ed. Northrop Frye (New York and London, 1963), pp.26-72. The fifth letter in Schiller's *On the Aesthetic*

Education of Man is also of interest. John Stuart Mill also occupied himself with the subject, saying that men speculate on the peculiarities of their own age and distinguished them from the features of former ages. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the first use of the term "spirit" as occurring with Shelley in 1820.

- 31 *Lettere*, I, 342. This position was, of course, normal in the *Conciliatore*.
- 32 See Friedrich Engel-Janosi, *Four Studies in French Romantic Historical Writing* (Baltimore, 1955), pp.111 and 117.
- 33 Nouvelle édition (Paris, 1867), p.11, and for the following reference *Waverley Or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since* (New York, 1964), p.114.
- 34 *Histoire de la conquête d'Angleterre* (Paris, 1867), I, 334, also quoted by Cesare De Lollis, *Alessandro Manzoni e gli storici liberali francesi della Restaurazione* (Bari, 1926), p.33. For a more pessimistic viewpoint on the transience of the generations and their passage into eternal silence, see Benjamin Constant, *De la religion* (1826), I, 46 and Georges Poulet, *Constant par lui-même* (Paris, 1968), pp. 28, 29, and, of course, Scott, *The Lady of the Lake*, Canto III, first stanza.
- 35 *Opere Varie*, Vol. III of *Opere*, a cura di Guido Bezzola (Milano, 1961), p.376.
- 36 *Tutte le opere*, IV, 3-4.
- 37 Cf. Claudio Varese, "'Mélange' e tempo nel Manzoni," in *Studi in onore di Luigi Russo* (Pisa, 1974), p.237.
- 38 *Lettere*, I, 227.
- 39 I have been able to consult only the English translation (London, 1822).
- 40 *Romantic Narrative Art* (Madison, 1960), pp.180-81.
- 41 Cf. David Daiches, "Scott's Achievement as a Novelist," in *Scott's Mind and Art*, ed. A. Norman Jeffares (Edinburgh, 1969), p.51. Naturally the pages of Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, are fundamental.
- 42 Introduction to *Ivanhoe* (New York, 1961), p.26.
- 43 Daiches, p.34.
- 44 *Tutte le opere*, Volume II, Tomo 3, *Fermo e Lucia*, 3^a ed. (Milano, 1964).
- 45 *Manzoni e la guerra contro il tempo* (Padova, 1973), p.40. Cf. Enzo Noè Girardi, "Manzoni e il Seicento," in E.N.G. e Gabriella Spada, *Manzoni e il Seicento lombardo* (Milano, 1977), pp.11-31.
- 46 Op. cit., p.162.
- 47 *The Historical Novel*, trans. from the German by Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Harmondsworth, 1969), p.79.
- 48 Cf. Niccolò Tommaseo, *Il Duca d'Atene*, in *Due baci e altri racconti*, a cura di Carlo Bo (Milano, 1943), p.150: " . . . perché tutti, anco i buoni, vivono la vita dell'età loro comechè possano rinchiudersi in monda cella o spaziare con l'occhio da una ardua e salubre cima, un orizzonte medesimo, una medesim'aria li circonda e li copre."
- 49 See Marian H. Cusac, *Narrative Structure in the Novels of Sir Walter Scott* (The Hague — Paris, 1969), p.19. Unlike Scott and novelists of the late 18th century, Manzoni never intervened to see that a scene was worthy of a certain painter; see also Luciano Bottoni, "Scott e Manzoni 1821: tecniche descrittive e funzioni epistemologiche," *Lingua e stile*, 5 (1970), 409-34, but especially 409-14. Manzoni was termed "a Flemish painter" by both Antonio Cesari and Pietro Giordani; see Giovanni Sforza, "Le prime accoglienze ai *Promessi Sposi*," in *Opere di Alessandro Manzoni* (Milano, 1905), Volume II. Parte II, pp. xxvii and xxx, who also gives other instances of comparisons of scenes from the novel with painting.
- 50 Cf. the comments of Romano Amerio in his edition of the *Osservazioni sulla morale cattolica* (Milano-Napoli, 1965), II, 319-20.

Falsity and Fiction in the "Allegory of Poets"

Marguerite Mills Chiarenza

In clarifying the distinction Dante draws in the *Convivio* (II.1) between the "allegory of poets," or fictitious allegory, and the "allegory of theologians," or scriptural allegory, Charles Singleton remarks that "the radical difference lies in the nature of the literal sense in the one and the other. The 'allegory of poets' . . . is a mode in which the first and literal sense is one devised . . . in order to conceal, and in concealing to convey, a truth. Not so in the other mode. . . . There the first sense is historical . . . and not 'fiction'." Such a difference is indeed radical, for it is one thing to search for meaning in reality and another to attribute to one meaning another meaning.

Part of what the distinction of the two allegories implies is that, where God creates, a poet must invent. Since most critics follow Singleton in recognizing that somehow Dante's description of the allegory of theologians fits his poem better than that of the allegory of poets, they have found themselves involved in subtle discussions on whether Dante's invention is to be considered an invention and in attempts to better define in what sense it is, and in what sense it is not, fiction.² While such discussions are, in my opinion, suggestive and useful, I also believe that they are more theoretical than historical and that we can simplify the problem, at least for the duration of the preliminary step I wish to take here, by remembering that, when Dante described the allegory of poets, he referred specifically to a fable in Ovid. We might then consider the probability that his description was primarily intended to fit classical pagan poetry; in particular the mythological tales so closely associated with that poetry. Once we compare scriptural allegory to mythological poetry, rather than to fiction in general, it becomes clear that the literal levels of the two are not merely different, but rather opposing. In fact, the letter of the one portrays revealed truth, that of the other pagan and superstitious lies. It also becomes clear that Dante, who was neither God nor a pagan, would no doubt consider his work distinct from, although related to, both types of allegory.

While I am certain that many would disagree with my suggestion that the well known passage in the *Convivio* concerned so specifically, perhaps even exclusively, the characteristics of mythological poetry,³ I think they would still concede that the myths portrayed by the poets represent, in the extreme falsity of their literal levels, an exasperated form of the poets' allegory. In fact, different from parables, for instance, in which the literal level, though not true, may be realistic and exemplary of reality, the myths are absurd tales which contradict reality as well as truth. When treating the myths, the early fathers attacked them precisely on the grounds that they were neither truthful nor realistic and, because of the myths, they began systematically to refer to poets as liars. This epithet, which was associated with poets throughout the Middle Ages, was aimed directly against the literal level of their works. In fact, the very fathers engaged in combatting the gods portrayed by the poets were willing to concede that truth could be hidden beneath the letter of the fables. They were even anxious to concede this, for such a hidden truth denied the validity of the fables themselves. A god who was but a symbol invented by a poet to portray a natural phenomenon was not a god at all.⁴

In Christian times, allegory was first used as an interpretation of mythology in order to destroy the poets' credibility, although not necessarily the poets themselves. Later, after the gods and their stories had ceased to exist as an ideological alternative to Christianity and had become exclusively representations of poetry, allegory was used in defense of the poets. But, the defenders and the attackers of myth had in common that, at least ideologically, they tolerated or accepted on the allegorical level what they rejected on the literal level.⁵ The double approach of the early fathers is understandable, for it served a practical purpose within their historical context. It was reasonable of them to reject the poets only so far as was necessary to achieve their goal of refuting the religion whose gods were portrayed by the poets. But the later centuries' defense of poetry based on a partial rejection is simply inconsistent. Henri de Lubac cites an indicative passage in which three possible approaches to mythological poetry are described: the myths can either be understood allegorically by the philosophers, believed foolishly by the pagans, or rejected truthfully by the Christians. Typically, the first — to understand allegorically — and the third — to reject truthfully — are not considered incompatible.⁶

While allegorization of the myths was an interpretive device

inherited from antiquity, there was one form of it, the Christianization of myth, which was, of course, peculiarly medieval. In the late Middle Ages, the truth the allegorizers found behind the fable was not necessarily philosophical or scientific; it could just as well be specifically Christian, or even revealed, truth. Although the point of these interpretations was clearly to salvage the respectability of poets like Ovid and to encourage the reading of them, their authors could not have thought that the texts they interpreted in any way implied the interpretations they proposed. Obviously, they did not deem this necessary. They simply suggested a truthful and edifying reading of a false text. Only a friend of poetry could ignore the incompatibility of the letter and the allegory in such interpretations. In fact, the enemies of poetry did not accept that a lying literal level could reveal, by concealing, the truth it contradicted.⁷

The irrelevance of the letter to the message was not a feature of the far more impressive medieval doctrines of the allegory of Scripture and the allegory of Nature. God revealed truth through reality, not through lies. Specifically, he drew Providence into the lines of history and harmony into those of nature, so that His invisible truth might be revealed through visible reality. His letter in no way contradicted His allegory and only concealed or hid it from those whose reading was faulty. While the principles of the allegory of Scripture and of reality reflect deeply the ideology of the Middle Ages, those of mythological allegory are ultimately a contradiction of it. As a matter of fact, the allegorization of myth was, in Christian times — as it had been in pagan times — more than anything else a way of justifying the absurdity of the poets' tales. In other words, allegory was needed as a formula to preserve the venerability of a literary tradition which the defenders of poetry were unwilling to reject, even on ideological or religious grounds. Returning to the concepts of the allegory of theologians and the allegory of poets, they do not seem to be two variations of the same cultural phenomenon at all: the first reflects the Middle Ages' faith that the visible signifies the invisible, the second is an apology for a poetic tradition which could not be ideologically justified on the literal level or, which is the same, in its own terms.

While the principles of allegory sacrificed the literal level of mythological poetry, in practice the myths appeared in medieval writings with a decorative function as often as they did with an allegorical intent. Toward the close of the Middle Ages, the practice began to overshadow the theory and, around the middle of the fourteenth century, we encounter a turning point in the

treatment of classical myth in Boccaccio's *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium*: a monumental, encyclopaedic type work which was intended to present its reader with all that was known of the ancient fables. Boccaccio's attempt to deal so inclusively and on such a large scale with the stories of the gods was unprecedented in the Middle Ages, but was rewarded with unqualified success in the Renaissance. In fact, not only were the *Genealogie* used intensively as a reference text in the centuries that followed, but they were also imitated in, and supplemented by, a series of other encyclopaedic works on mythology.⁸

With Boccaccio, disregard and ideological contempt for the face value or literal details of the myths is replaced by a focusing on the literal levels of the fables as aesthetic formalities. Allegorical meaning sinks into the background and, while Boccaccio does follow his descriptions of the variations on the stories of the gods with some — mostly traditional — allegories, the attention and space given to this aspect is minor compared to that devoted to the elaboration of the stories themselves. Boccaccio's large scale work on the formalities of the myths both dignified their literal level and prepared the ground for the highly formalized treatment they were to receive during the Renaissance.

However, the *Genealogie* does not just mark the formal beginning of a new attitude, but also reflects, in a variety of ways, the doctrines of an age which had not ended and the controversies which would continue beyond it.⁹ By accompanying his work with two final chapters of apology, Boccaccio reveals his need for an apology; not just for myth, but principally for poetry itself, as the propagator of myth.¹⁰ When, at one point, he breaks off in his apology to paraphrase the Creed and thereby testify that the study of the gods has not contaminated him with worship for them,¹¹ he reflects the ideological threat that the literal level of pagan poetry still held for his age. Another indication of the prevailing positions in Boccaccio's time is to be found in the long series of specific attacks he anticipates, including: that poetry is useless; that composing stories is damnable; that poetry is obscure; that poets are liars; and that poets are the apes of philosophers.¹² While a few of Boccaccio's answers to these expected accusations tend toward a defense of ornamentation as an end in itself, most of them lean heavily on the doctrine of allegory as the truth hidden beneath a lie, revealing that even Boccaccio had no more convincing argument than that of allegory with which to defend the beloved tales of the pagan poets.

Still — though perhaps in a more pragmatic than ideological way — Boccaccio's work did determine a new direction in the

treatment of myth, whose literal level was somewhat redeemed by a greater emphasis placed on its formalities. The same cannot be said of Dante's treatment of mythology, which is much more accurately described as a solution of medieval tendencies than as an opening toward Humanistic or Renaissance ones. On the one hand, he rejected anything, literary or other, which denied reality or was untruthful and, unlike Boccaccio, he did not accept to any degree the notion of literature as an end in itself, or of a lie as justified by its beauty. On the other hand, he was committed to a unique and functional role for poetry and to the pagan tradition with which poetry had attained, in his view, its greatest heights. Thus, he was subjected directly to the conflict between tradition and ideology which had all along been an underlying feature of the standards of medieval mythological allegory.

In confronting this conflict, he neither chose the traditional road of relegating all falsity to the literal level of the myths he represented in his poem, nor did he seek to obscure their falsity by stressing their ornamental function. Rather, he attempted to relate the allegorical function directly to the literal level, or to make the letter demand a truthful reading, rather than to simply allow for a truthful but independent interpretation. In the *Divine Comedy*, Dante tampered with and manipulated the traditional myths, he contaminated them with Christian details, he placed them in positions in the poem where their association with a crucial aspect of his message could not be missed. All of these features of Dante's mythological imagery serve the purpose of fusing the truthfulness of the message with the story itself, or substituting an allegorical meaning confounded by the letter with an allegory implicit in it.

To clarify my description of Dante's use of mythology in the poem, I will offer just one example. The *Paradiso* begins with an invocation to Apollo, who is called upon to aid the poet in his attempt to speak of those things which exceed human comprehension. The god is asked to come to the mortal's aid and to act as he did on the occasion in which he stripped Marsyas of his flesh to punish the Satyr for challenging him to a musical contest. Dante ends the invocation by reminding Apollo that the ambition to reach beyond human limits should be cause for redundant joy in the god. The invocation hardly makes sense, unless its literal obscurity is resolved in terms of a direct contradiction of the pagan context of the traditional story of the musical contest between Marsyas and Apollo. The threat that the mortal's rivalry presented to the pagan god is irrelevant to the Christian God. The contest cannot be seen as between rivals. A Christian parallel, Dante seems to suggest, is for a mortal to seek to reach the true God, and this is a

source of redundant joy to the God of Charity. If a Christian can obtain the goal of such striving, then his ultimate fulfilment can be seen as a kind of lifting of him from his earthly flesh.¹³ Dante's allusion to the pagan myth is comprehensible only in a Christian, and therefore truthful, context. Thus, the truthfulness traditionally relegated to the fable's allegorical level, lies within the arrangement of its literal elements.

Within medieval ideology, God's invisible truth could only be approached through visible reality, which God created to this end. For Dante the realism of his work was in its power to imitate reality, and to truly imitate reality meant to function as reality and, therefore, to reflect through a literal representation an intangible truth whose only source was the representation itself. Tradition had allowed, somewhat incongruously, that a poet's work might be simultaneously literally false and allegorically true. Much more coherently, Dante conceived of a representation which, though false to the letter of reality, was true to its spirit; and to be true to the spirit of reality meant to be implicitly meaningful. Thus, rather than saying that Dante wrote an allegory of theologians, we might simply say that he attempted to break away from a contradictory tradition related to poetic allegory; that, in fact, by writing into the lines of the letter an allegory comprehensible only through it, not independently from it, he rejected both the notion of an ideologically superfluous literal level and that of an independently true allegorical one.

Obviously, my rather schematic remarks do not constitute a full discussion of the matter. But, the points I wish to make are finally quite simple. The trend since Singleton has been, on the one hand, to investigate very thoroughly and historically the nature of the allegory of theologians but, on the other, to almost take for granted that the allegory of poets can be understood in the light of modern notions of fiction. I would like to suggest that it was not the ambiguity of fiction as such that was most directly responsible for Dante's innovations in allegory, but rather the ambivalence of his being a Christian poet in a pagan tradition. The allegory Dante produced for the *Comedy* need not be seen as a paradoxical invention of the truth, for it cannot be explained, I think more historically, as the result of his need to guarantee that the truth he could only read into pagan poetry was written into his.

NOTES

- 1 Charles Singleton, *Dante Studies I: Commedia, Elements of Structure* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p.14.
- 2 For a bibliography of discussions of the nature of Dante's allegory, see Robert Hollander, *Allegory in Dante's Commedia* (Princeton, 1961), pp.321-335.
- 3 Of two critics who have written recently on my subject, Maria Picchio Simonielli, "Vernacular Poetic Sources for Dante's Use of Allegory," *Dante Studies*, 43 (1975), 131-142, would certainly disagree with me, while Robert Hollander, "Dante *Theologus-Poeta*," *Dante Studies*, 44 (1976), 91-136, might well agree. I, at least, agree strongly with his view that we commit an anachronism when we assume that the defense of poetry, with its great pagan heritage, was a foregone conclusion for Dante. The weakness of the case for poetry in Dante's time is a central issue for our understanding of his conception of allegory, and one that Hollander is exceptional in pointing out.
- 4 For a survey of the early fathers' treatment of mythology, see Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods*, trans. Barbara F. Sessions (New York, 1953), pp.1-121. See also Harold Hagendahl, *Latin Fathers and the Classics: A Study on the Apologists, Jerome and Other Christian Writers* (Göteborg, 1958).
- 5 The ambiguity of late medieval justifications of pagan poetry as allegory is extensively documented by Henri de Lubac in *Exégèse Médievale: Les Quatre Sens de l'Écriture* (Paris, 1964), II, 2, 125-262.
- 6 Henri de Lubac, p.185.
- 7 The enemies of poetry are, of course, the theologians. For a discussion of the cogency of their arguments, see Robert Hollander's article cited above. Hollander also offers extensive bibliographical references on the subject.
- 8 See, e.g., Vincenzo Cartari, *Le imagini colla Sposizione degli Dei degli Antichi* (Venice, 1556); Natale Conti, *Mythologiae sive Explicationis Fabularum Libri X* (Venice, 1551). For a discussion and description of such works, see Jean Seznec, pp.219-323.
- 9 For a discussion of the aspects I am speaking of in the *Genealogie*, see Etienne Gilson, "Poesie et Vérité dans la *Genealogie de Boccace*," *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 2 (1964), 253-282.
- 10 These two famous chapters are translated by Charles G. Osgood in *Boccaccio on Poetry* (Princeton, 1956).
- 11 Osgood, pp.123-129.
- 12 Osgood, pp.32-87.
- 13 For a fuller discussion of the meaning of the Marsyas image, see my article, "Pagan Images in the Prologue of the *Paradiso*," in *Proceedings, Pacific Northwest Council on Foreign Languages*, 26, Part I, pp.133-136.

Avventure letterarie di un asino

(*Decameron* V.5)*

Antonio D'Andrea

La rubrica della novella di Pietro di Vinciolo costituisce un esempio cospicuo di uso dell'asindeto — uno di quei rimedi suggeriti per l'*abbreviatio* che hanno valore piuttosto qualitativo che quantitativo, in quanto assicurano allo stile un ritmo particolarmente rapido, senza per questo contribuire veramente, almeno in modo rilevante, alla brevità.¹ Si tratta di una delle rubriche più lunghe del *Decameron*:

Pietro di Vinciolo va a cenare altrove; la donna sua si fa venire un garzone, torna Pietro, ella il nasconde sotto una cesta da polli; Pietro dice essere stato trovato in casa d'Ercolano, con cui cenava, un giovane messovi dalla moglie; la donna biasima la moglie d'Ercolano; uno asino per isciagura pon piede in su le dita di colui che era sotto la cesta, egli grida, Pietro corre là, vedelo, cognosce lo 'nganno della moglie, con la quale ultimamente rimane in concordia per la sua tristezza. (V.10.1)

Nel racconto di Apuleio (*Metamorphoses* IX.14-28), fonte ben nota della decima novella della V giornata,² l'asino è Lucius, il protagonista delle *Metamorfosi*. Questi, invece di esser trasformato in un uccello, come avrebbe desiderato, era stato trasformato per errore in un asino, conservando, però, l'intelligenza di un uomo: "sensum tamen retinebam humanum" (III.26), come dice egli stesso. Lucius è, infatti, anche il narratore, e le sue vicende sono raccontate dal suo punto di vista. Tutte le sue simpatie vanno al marito, un mugnaio, "bonus alioquin vir et adprime modestus"; e nient'altro che odio è riservato alla moglie, una donna "saeva scaeva viriosa ebriosa pervicax pertinax," che maltratta il povero Lucius, batten-dolo senza pietà e sovraccaricandolo di lavoro. Pestando le dita del giovane "qui ad instar testudinis alveum succubabat," egli agisce, dunque, di proposito, per vendicarsi della donna e aiutare il padrone a scoprire la verità:

Quae res optatissimam mihi vindictae subministravit occasionem: namque praetergrediens observatos extremos adulteri digitos, qui per angustias cavi tegminis prominebant, obliquata atque infesta ungula

compressos usque ad summam minutiem contero, donec intolerabili dolore commotus, sublato flebili clamore repulsoque et abiecto alveo, conspectui profano redditus scaenam propudosae mulieris patefecit.

La situazione è del tutto diversa in Boccaccio. L'azione è situata a Perugia, non molto prima dei tempi di Boccaccio: "non è ancora molto tempo passato" (V.10.6). Le condizioni di vita dei personaggi principali sono attentamente descritte. Il marito non è un anonimo mugnaio, ma appartiene ad una ben nota famiglia perugina. Tanto che, al principio del Settecento, un discendente di Pietro, il conte Giacinto Vincioli, ritenne opportuno protestare contro la novella di Boccaccio, che comprometteva il buon nome della famiglia.³ La moglie, poi, è descritta come "una giovane compressa, di pel rosso e accesa, la quale due mariti più tosto che uno avrebbe voluti" (V.10.7). Soprattutto non c'è nulla di quella singolare mistura di grottesco e d'inverosimile di cui si compiace Apuleio, nessuna traccia dell'atmosfera magica e come astratta delle *Metamorfosi*, nessun residuo della calcolata malizia di Lucius, l'asino dotato di sentimenti umani. L'asino di Boccaccio è un semplice asino, che non ha niente di magico, un asino galantuomo, che si trova coinvolto per puro caso nello scandaloso imbroglio.

Ma questa semplicità non deve ingannarci. Essa nasconde, infatti, un'insospettata fonte letteraria. La correzione di Apuleio avviene per sovrapposizione all'asino delle *Metamorfosi* di un altro asino, quello della favola di Priapo. Esso appare nelle glosse al *Teseida*, dove è raccontata la favola del dio degli orti, che si leva di notte tutto nudo per insidiare Vesta:

... e venuta la notte, lucendo la luna, Priapo tutto ignudo si levò e andonne tacitamente al luogo dove Vesta dormiva, e essendo già disposto per entrarle allato, *avenne per isciagura che uno asino*, sopra il quale Sileno, vecchio balio di Bacco, era venuto e giacevasi là dove Vesta dormiva, cominciò a ragghiare si forte, che Vesta e molti altri si destarono. La quale veggendosi, per la luna che luceva, presso Priapo, e conoscendo quello per che veniva, cominciò a gridare; laonde Priapo cominciò a fuggire verso il suo tabernacolo, ma non poté si prestamente fuggire che da tutti non fosse veduto così ignudo. . . . (Teseida VII.50.1, ed. A. Limentani [Milano, 1964], p.466, corsivo mio)

La favola risale ai *Fasti*, dove è raccontata due volte: una prima volta (I.391-438) oggetto delle attenzioni di Priapo è una ninfa di nome Lotis, una seconda volta (VI.321-344) è, invece, Vesta. Il Boccaccio segue soprattutto la seconda versione, ma combinandola con la prima, com'è evidente dalla sua insistenza sul chiaro di luna, ovviamente derivato dai versi conclusivi della prima versione:

At Deus, obscoena nimium quoque parte paratus,
Omnibus ad lunae lumina risus erat. (I.437-438)

Comunque l'inopportuno intervento dell'asino è indicato in modo simile nelle due versioni (I.434 *intempestivos edidit ore sonos*, VI.342 *intempestivo quum rudit ille sono*) e anche da Lattanzio, che riprende la seconda versione ovidiana (*Divinae Institutiones* I.xxi.25, *intempestivo clamore aselli*).⁴ L'espressione del Boccaccio, "per isciagura," corrisponde all'aggettivo latino, "intempestivus"; e tutta la frase, "avvenne per isciagura che uno asino," nel racconto della sfortunata impresa di Priapo, è molto vicina a quella con cui si fa menzione dell'intervento dell'asino nella rubrica della novella di Pietro di Vinciolo: "uno asino per isciagura pon piede. . . ." La rubrica mette in evidenza la cristallizzazione del binomio *asino-sciagura* nella memoria verbale del Boccaccio. Sul filo dell'*abbreviatio* ritorna così, insieme allo stesso binomio, lo stesso asino e lo stesso effetto comico; e l'asino della favola di Priapo, inconsapevole e sprovvisto *actant de récit*, prende così il posto di quello malizioso e vendicativo delle *Metamorfosi* di Apuleio.

La coesione del binomio vien meno nel testo della novella:

Il quale e cioè, il giovane avendo, per ciò che carpone gli conveniva stare, alquanto le dita dell'una mano stese in terra fuor della cesta, tanta fu la sua ventura, o sciagura che vogliam dire, che questo asino ve gli pose su piede, laonde egli, grandissimo dolor sentendo, mise un grande strido. (V.10.49)

L'*amplificatio* allontana i termini del binomio e li distacca l'uno dall'altro. La parola *sciagura*, che nella rubrica commenta l'imprevedibile intervento dell'asino e nasce, infatti, come si è visto dal latino *intempestivus*, nella novella è disgiunta dall'inopportuno animale ed è direttamente collegata col giovane nascosto sotto la cesta. L'effetto comico è radicalmente diverso. Il sostantivo *sciagura* messo ora in opposizione a *ventura* ("tanta fu la sua ventura, o sciagura che vogliam dire") introduce un nuovo elemento di comicità: una maliziosa *dubitatio*, che sembra aver suggerito il modello stilistico della conclusione. Dioneo, infatti, che racconta la novella, sembra colpito da improvvisa amnesia, e dichiara di non riuscire più a ricordare che cosa fosse accaduto dopo che i tre avevano cenato insieme. E la mattina seguente il giovane, mentre viene accompagnato fino alla piazza della città, è assalito da una crisi di incertezza:

Dopo cena, quello che Pietro si divisasse a soddisfacimento di tutti e tre, m'è uscito di mente; so io ben cotanto che la mattina veggente infino in su

la Piazza fu il giovane, non assai certo quel più stato si fosse la notte moglie o marito, accompagnato. (V.10.63)

Il materiale narrativo è elaborato diversamente e con risultati diversi nella versione breve del racconto, data nella rubrica, e in quella ampia, data nella novella. Ancora una volta *abbreviatio* e *amplificatio* rivelano la loro natura non puramente quantitativa, ma decisamente, inevitabilmente, qualitativa.

Ma le vicissitudini letterarie dell'asino in questione — da Apuleio ad Ovidio; dalle glosse al *Teseida* alla novella di Pietro di Vinciolo e alla rubrica — suggeriscono un'ulteriore considerazione. Un grande scrittore come Boccaccio è capace di combinare, trasformare e dissimulare con estrema abilità le sue fonti. L'identificazione della fonte più importante (in questo caso, le *Metamorfosi* di Apuleio) non autorizza in alcun modo la conclusione che tutto ciò che non è reperibile in essa sia stato inventato da Boccaccio; e ciò si può ripetere a maggior ragione per le novelle di cui non si conoscono le fonti. A questo proposito è opportuno ricordare, sempre a proposito della V.10, che anche per le differenze esistenti fra Boccaccio e Apuleio circa la caratterizzazione del marito e della moglie e il tono della conclusione — differenze che sembrano essere la naturale conseguenza del cambiamento di situazione — è stata indicata, in modo convincente, una fonte in un'anonima composizione in versi del XII o XIII secolo, una commedia elegiaca: *Uxor quedam conqueritur de marito sodomita cuius nomen erat Cavichiolus, origine Papiensis*.⁵ E' forse opportuno, dunque, dare più importanza di quanto non si faccia di solito alla dichiarazione dello stesso Boccaccio che egli non è stato l'*inventore* delle novelle (Concl. Aut. 17) e tener presente che egli lavorava, non tanto d'invenzione, quanto di elaborazione, combinazione, adattamento, trasformazione, amplificazione o abbreviazione del materiale narrativo; non tanto d'*immaginazione*, quanto piuttosto di *fantasia*. Di scarsa utilità e di dubbia validità teorica mi sembra, a questo proposito, la tesi che l'intelligenza dell'arte di Boccaccio possa prescindere dalla conoscenza delle fonti, poiché queste non possono comunque togliere nulla alla sua originalità. Non si tratta, infatti, di mettere in dubbio l'originalità; si tratta, però, di determinarne puntualmente il significato. E a tale scopo la ricerca delle fonti può contribuire in modo decisivo, permettendo di seguire l'origine e lo sviluppo, la formazione e la trasformazione dei vari temi narrativi. L'arte non è un dato di fatto da registrare, ma un'attività, di cui si può comprendere il significato solo ripercorrendone la vicenda. Il povero asino, così insistentemente accusato di inopportunità, può

tornare una volta tanto opportuno come umile illustrazione di questa verità.

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NOTE

* Questo articolo è il risultato della rielaborazione di una breve nota pubblicata in appendice al mio saggio nelle "Rubriche del *Decameron*," *Yearbook of Italian Studies* (1973-75), 41-67.

1 V. il saggio nelle "Rubriche del *Decameron*," 55-59.

2 Alle convergenze e divergenze fra Boccaccio e Apuleio nelle due novelle del *Decameron* (V.10 e VII.2) derivate dalle *Metamorfosi* apuleiane ha dedicato uno studio Laura Sanguineti White, *Apuleio e Boccaccio* (Bologna, 1977).

3 Egli accenna anche a delle proteste fatte a suo tempo dalla famiglia contro Boccaccio: *Istoria del Decamerone di G. B.* scritta da Domenico Maria Manni (Firenze, 1742), pp.368-369.

4 Lattanzio trascura del tutto la prima versione e non fa, quindi, a differenza di Boccaccio, alcuna menzione del chiaro di luna.

5 Si veda M. Pastore Stocchi, "Un antecedente latino-medievale di Pietro di Vinciolo," in *Studi sul Boccaccio*, I (1963), 349-362.

Due racconti inediti di Renato Fucini

Leonard G. Sbrocchi

Negli anni in cui Firenze era capitale d'Italia (1865-70), frequentando i vari caffè e le varie farmacie della città — luoghi di ritrovo degli intellettuali dell'epoca, — il giovane aiutante ingegnere Renato Fucini (1843-1921) si fece conoscere ed apprezzare come spirito arguto e brillante per i suoi sonetti dialogati in vernacolo pisano. Servendosi del sonetto come satira, commento (triste o gaio), osservazione psicologica, o come descrizione, il Fucini mostra le molteplici facce del popolino di Pisa. L'angolo visuale dal quale egli proietta questa società è dal suo proprio interno: Neri il personaggio principale che se ne fa interprete è popolano anche lui.

L'acutezza dell'osservazione e la capacità espressiva che da essi emana non sfuggirono a Pasquale Villari il quale, in seguito, lo "arruolò" al suo servizio inviandolo nel 1877 a Napoli col preciso compito di fargli un rapporto dettagliato¹ sulle condizioni sociali in cui languivano gli abitanti dei *bassi* della città partenopea. Il risultato di questo viaggio fu il volume *Napoli a occhio nudo*, una serie di nove lettere con cui il Fucini alternando e contrastando descrizioni della bellezza del paesaggio di Napoli e dintorni con descrizioni estremamente realistiche da parere "allucinanti" del misero stato in cui vivevano i quattro quinti della popolazione di questa città, crea una delle più forti *denunce* sociali che siano mai state fatte in letteratura italiana. Non è una coincidenza che Giustino Fortunato² nel 1913 lo ristampasse come primo volume della Serie La Questione Meridionale — questione che, purtroppo, a cento anni di distanza non è stata ancora risolta.

Tuttavia l'opera che rese il Fucini uno degli scrittori più rappresentativi della Toscana della seconda metà dell'Ottocento fu *Le Veglie di Neri* (1882) che porta come sottotitolo "paesi e figure della campagna toscana." Il successo delle *Veglie* fu consacrato anche dal fatto che dal 1898 al 1949 circa, fu usato come libro di testo nella maggior parte delle scuole italiane. Alle *Veglie* fece seguito *All'aria aperta* (1897) anch'esso una collezione di racconti che presentano diversi aspetti della campagna toscana. Ai contemporanei del Fucini ed ai critici in generale questi racconti piacquero per la purezza ed immediatezza della lingua parlata, per la caratterizzazione dei personaggi, e perché erano dei bozzetti a sé stanti, pieni

di colore locale e pertanto fedeli rappresentazioni (umoristiche o sentimentali) degli abitanti della campagna toscana.

Dopo la morte del Fucini, il prof. Guido Biagi, l'amico di famiglia che ne ordinò le carte, pubblicò due racconti: *Nonno Damiano*, subito incorporato alle *Veglie*, e *La maestrina*³ in volume a sé, e in seguito anche incorporato alle *Veglie*. Perché il Biagi, che pur dovette conoscere questi due racconti che ora noi presentiamo e che certamente posseggono le stesse caratteristiche della maggior parte di quelli contenuti in *All'aria aperta*, non li pubblicò? La risposta a tale domanda potrebbe essere: non li considerò dello stesso calibro degli altri due; oppure: in confronto *La maestrina* è un racconto molto lungo e contiene una denuncia sociale fortemente marcata. Inoltre ambedue i racconti hanno molto pathos ed una carica umana assai accentuata, e per questo, forse, dal Biagi considerati racconti "seri."⁴ Quel che alla critica in genere e al Biagi in particolare passò inosservato, forse perché contenuto in un piccolo taccuino di appunti,⁵ è la visione globale della società della campagna toscana che il Fucini si era proposto di presentarci attraverso una serie di quadri che sono appunto i "paesi e figure della campagna toscana."

Dopo l'esperienza napoletana, il Fucini, mettendo a profitto la spigliatezza del dialogo impiegato nei *Sonetti* e la prosa di *Napoli a occhio nudo* trovò che la forma più efficace di presentare le condizioni sociali di questi abitanti era appunto il racconto. Questo gli permetteva di mettere a fuoco, in parte o nella loro interezza, a volte dei "paesi," a volte delle "figure," cercando sempre però di cogliere il movente della loro attività, il loro modo di vedere se stessi e gli altri, gli effetti che la società esterna ha su di loro, ed in genere il loro modo di agire. Senza addentrarci in un'analisi dettagliata della novellistica fuciniana,⁶ accenneremo brevemente ai caratteri di questo mondo. Per il Fucini gli abitanti del contado toscano e soprattutto delle Maremme vivono "felici" nel loro ambiente mefitico contentandosi di sbarcare il lunario giorno per giorno perché accettano la loro sorte e trovano soddisfazione in piccole cose quali la caccia e la pesca. Agiscono o per raggiungere il proprio utile o per ignoranza; mescolano religione e superstizione e tuttavia credono in Dio e si rivolgono a Lui in estremo bisogno. I rapporti tra padroni e contadini sono anche basati sul proprio tornaconto, se questo viene a mancare per una ragione o un'altra il contadino perde il lavoro, e l'operaio, in genere è guardato come un animale da sfruttare (*Menico*). La politica nazionale non li tocca ma essa può avere degli effetti deleteri su di loro (*Fiorella*). A volte questi abitanti sono anche capaci di azioni generose (*Tigrino*). La denuncia sociale qui non è né così marcate né così aperta come in

Napoli a occhio nudo, forse perché i contadini stessi non sempre si ribellano allo *status quo*.

Ora, nel dare alla luce questi due racconti si è tenuto conto del fatto che, ci sembra, essi contengano degli aspetti di questa veduta d'insieme che non conoscevamo prima. Vero è che il raggiungimento del proprio utile resta il movente principale delle azioni dei personaggi, soprattutto nel primo racconto, nel secondo però esso è altro. Anche la caratterizzazione delle "figure" ha qui un'angolazione nuova. Per esempio, nella sua narrativa il Fucini ci ha dato diverse figure di preti: dal maestro incapace (*Il Signor Cappellano*) che somministrava la cultura al suono di una canna sulla testa degli studenti, al goloso (*Scampagnata*), al cacciatore (*Fra i due litiganti* . . .), ma mai uno come Don Remigio dell'omonimo racconto. Don Remigio è ben visto dai contadini non perché sia un prete modello, ma perché, in un certo senso, è uno di loro e in lui essi vedono il raggiungimento del proprio interesse. I superiori non gli avrebbero mai dato una semplice cappellania e tanto meno una parrocchia se i contadini non si fossero ribellati. E Don Remigio approfitta della loro ignoranza e superstizione, come pure della sua conoscenza dell'animo umano, per raggiungere il proprio utile: ottenere una parrocchia e con essa il benessere economico. L'angolazione nuova qui consiste nella psicologia di Don Remigio e nel fatto che è la prima volta che i contadini non si ribellano né accusano un prete al contrario lo difendono.

Nel *Consiglior Ciabatta* più che la patetica figura del consigliere è quella del medico in rapporto ai membri della banda del villaggio che interessa. Diversi medici compaiono nell'opera del Fucini, tuttavia essi sono quasi sempre presentati di scorcio: incisivamente (*Dolci ricordi*), ove vediamo il medico prima attraverso gli occhi e le apprensioni del figlio, poi attraverso i panni presso il focolare, e infine nel quadro finale che resta indelebilmente impresso nella nostra memoria:

" — Prendi . . . Ora è roba tua . . . Ma prima di spenderli . . . guardami! — e mi fulminò con un'occhiata fiera e malinconica. — Prima di spenderli, ricordati come tuo padre li guadagna.

Una spronata, uno sfaglio e si allontanò a capo basso nel buio, tra la neve e il vento che turbinava."

cauti (*Scampagnata*) ove mentre tutti sono in chiesa il dottore accenna al personaggio narratore quanto sia difficile la sua vita in quella condotta; o ancora in procinto di perdere questa condotta (*Passaggio memorabile*) a causa della malevolenza e dell'ignoranza delle giunte comunali. In questo racconto però ne vediamo uno in primo piano che soffre le conseguenze del buon esercizio della sua

professione. Infatti i bandisti (e con essi l'intero villaggio), non si curano del fatto che egli ha salvato la vita al povero Ciabatta da lui prima dato per spacciato, anzi proprio per questo lo vilipendiano, lo maltrattano, gliene combinano di tutti i colori, e infine lo costringono a cercarsi un'altra condotta e a lasciare il paese. Il loro ripicco è che essi hanno concertato inutilmente la marcia funebre in onore del consiglier Ciabatta.

Come tutti i racconti umoristici del Fucini anche questi presentano un umorismo che scaturisce da una sottile ironia. Ma è un umorismo triste che fa da commentario alle azioni dei suoi personaggi e ci spinge a riflettere sulla condizione umana in generale — quasi un "mal giocondo" pirandelliano.

Diamo ora il testo integrale dei due racconti il cui manoscritto si trova nella Biblioteca Riccardiana di Firenze N.3971.

DON REMIGIO

Povero Don Remigio! tanto bravo, tanto buono, tanto disgraziato. Il Vescovo, a parlargli di lui, si turbava subito; a parlargli di qualche parrocchia o magari d'una povera cappellania vacante per darla a lui, diventava una bestia. Chi sa? Ma, nonostante l'inesplicabile avversione dei suoi superiori, Don Remigio era ben visto dai contadini dei dintorni per la gran passione che aveva al gioco della briscola e perché avevano risaputo, non si sa come, che egli possedeva e teneva sotto chiave un santo miracoloso il quale non aspettava che l'occasione per farsi vivo. Questo santo, a detta dei meglio informati, era specialista abilissimo per i miracoli, diciamo così, agricoli. Famoso per ammazzare i topi delle carciofaie; inarrivabile per la distruzione delle grillotalpe quando quelle bestiacce invadevano un campo di poponi o di cocomeri. Ma il miracolo per il quale egli poteva sfidare e vincere di sottogamba tutti i suoi colleghi era quello di far venire a colpo la pioggia e il sereno, secondo il bisogno.

Vacò finalmente una parrocchia vicina. Il Vescovo aveva già pronto il prete da mandarvi, e lo mandò. Ma quel malcapitato ebbe a scappare di rincorsa e ringraziare Dio se gli era riuscito di salvare la pelle perché tutti i contadini di quella parrocchia e delle parrocchie vicine, si sollevarono come un sol uomo, e, prima con le buone, poi con le cattive, vollero che a quella cura fosse mandato Don Remigio. Per vincere questa ribellione furono prese le misure più energiche; ma tutto fu inutile, e le autorità ecclesiastiche e governative, per amore dell'ordine, ebbero a piegare la testa e

inchinarsi a Don Remigio il quale, in compagnia d'un gatto legato dentro a un sacco e d'una serva che portava una sola valigia per tutt'e due, andò trionfante ad occupare quel posto. Il primo miracolo il santo lo aveva già fatto; ma, nonostante, Don Remigio ebbe subito a scrivere a un figurineo di Lucca perché gli mandasse un busto di gesso da potersi presentare all'adorazione dei suoi parrocchiani come il già celebrato autore di portentosi miracoli che avrebbe fatto.

Il santo di gesso venne, e l'occasione per esperimentarne la bravura non si fece aspettare. Una lunga e ostinata siccità venne a minacciare di un grave disastro la campagna. I contadini di tutta la Toscana erano sgomenti e disperati senza sapere a qual santo ricorrere; quelli della parrocchia di Don Remigio erano, invece, tranquilli e contenti più di prima. Non avevano ancora chiesto il miracolo perché Don Remigio aveva loro detto che non bisognava abusare della bontà e della bravura del suo santo, e che fossero venuti da lui solamente in un bisogno estremo. Venuto questo bisogno, un gruppo numeroso di popolani si presentarono alla canonica.

Don Remigio li ricevette festosamente, e, stropicciandosi le mani dalla contentezza, domandò:

— Ci siete tutti?

— Tutti tutti, nossignore. Ci manca Paolino del Sordo, Isidoro del Birindelli, Gianni Vetturale, Pasquale delle Bard ...

— Basta, basta. Bisogna che andiate subito a chiamare chi manca perché, lo sapete e ve l'ho detto tante volte, se non ci siete tutti e se tutti non siete della stessa opinione è inutile molestarlo, il mio santo non fa miracoli neanche a frustarlo a legnate.

Dopo una mezz'ora c'erano tutti.

— O bravi bravi! — disse Don Remigio. — Così va bene. E allora vediamo.

Fece un buon predicozzo sulla fe'de, parlò del vino ch'era già rincarato, parlò delle barbabietole, delle granaglie le quali, se non fosse piovuto dentro due o tre giorni, si potevan considerare come perdute, e concluse col riconoscere che non c'era tempo da perdere. E poi si venne subito alla votazione.

— Chi alza la mano — esclamò Don Remigio — approva che si chieda subito la pioggia, chi non l'alza lo disapprova.

Dei trentadue presenti, trenta soli alzarono la mano. Due stettero fermi.

— Male, male di molto questa faccenda! — brontolò Don Remigio — Che v'è saltato in testa a voi due? Presto, presto! Sentiamo! —

Il primo dissenziente, grattandosi la zucca, osservò:

— Se piove dentro tre giorni . . . anche dentro la settimana, io Signor priore, son rovinato. Se i contadini voglion l'acqua, padroni. Ma noi lavandai . . . Dio del cielo! Oh, la facci baia e non canzoni! C'è da asciugare un bucato che fa paura, e se quelle donne sapessero che anch'io mi son messo d'accordo per far piovere mi mangerebbero vivo. —

Don Remigio gongolava; e volgendosi inviperito all'altro dissenziente, gridò:

— E voi? Sentiamo anche voi! . . . Ma dunque non sarà possibile? . . . Vergine santissima! La campagna brucia, il tempo scappa . . . Sentiamo, ne! —

— Lei deve riflettere, Signor Priore, che d'aria non si campa e che noi vetturali . . . si deve figurare che questa settimana ci ho tre spacci da buscare una venticinquina di lire; e tutt'e tre m'hanno fatto dire che se piove non se ne fa nulla . . . Dunque lei vede che se io mi rifiuto e se io . . . —

Fu impossibile metterli d'accordo. Il lavandaio e il vetturale piantarono le spalle al muro, e chi vuol Cristo se lo preghi. Si presentarono presto altre bellissime occasioni, ma i risultati furono uguali a quelli della prima. Tantoché il santo di Don Remigio fa la vita del gaudente, col buzzo pieno di miracoli senza poterne buttar fuori neanche uno; e Don Remigio, deplorando la incorregibile caparbietà e le inevitabili divergenze dei cervelli umani, se la gode allegramente, soccorso in ogni occasione dal pollaio, dalla cantina e dalla fede dei suoi popolani.

IL CONSIGLIER CIABATTA

Sebbene i suoi compaesani gli avessero appioppato l'ignobile soprannome di Ciabatta, egli, che si chiamava Alcibiade Carcassi, godeva la stima e la benevolenza di tutti per la rispettabile casata alla quale apparteneva, per il suo grado di consigliere comunale e, soprattutto, per la protezione che, larga e disinteressata, aveva sempre accordato alla banda musicale del Comune. Non so se fosse cavaliere, ma credo di sì. Il suo fratello, oggi sindaco e presidente del consorzio per le arginature dei fiumi, lui è cavaliere di certo perché ne lessi la nomina sulla gazzetta ufficiale. Di lui, come dicevo, non lo so; ma me ne voglio informare.

Il soprannome di Ciabatta gli venne perché, qualche anno addietro, soffrendo d'un incomodo ne' piedi, fu costretto per qualche mese a non poter portare altra calzatura che le ciabatte. Se ne trovò in seguito tanto bene che non poté quasi più abbandonare

quel genere di calzatura. Sui primi tempi cominciò a mettersi le scarpe solamente la domenica, poi per le solennità, poi per la festa del Titolare e per quella del Corpus Domini solamente, e da ultimo, per il Corpus Domini solo perché il proposto messe i piedi al muro e non gli permise in nessun modo di venire a processione con le ciabatte.

Ma in sostanza, dentro a quel soprannome c'era tutta la stima e tutta la simpatia dell'intera popolazione, esemplare, tranne quattro o sei rompicolli, per una popolazione per codardia assolutamente rara e per intelligenza molto comune; perché quelle ciabatte erano agli occhi di tutti un indiscutibile attestato di indipendenza e di democrazia.

E fin qui tutto sarebbe andato bene. Ma quello che non andava tanto bene era la salute del povero Ciabatta. Dopo quella tremenda indigestione che prese quando cantò messa il suo nipote di Gamberaia, non ha avuto più pace. Pareva da principio, che si trattasse di cosa leggera; ma da qualche giorno le cose avevano preso una piega così brutta, da mettere seriamente in pensiero. Disappetenza assoluta, vertigini continue e un colore della pelle così giallo da non lasciar dubbio su gravissime complicazioni al fegato.

Il medico ne parlò una sera in farmacia, e ne parlò in modo da mettere lo sgomento in tutti quelli che lo ascoltavano perché, secondo lui, tranne il caso di una reazione non punto sperabile da organismi dell'età e del temperamento del povero Ciabatta, non c'era da illudersi sulle condizioni disperate del malato.

Il maestro della banda, che si trovava presente a quei discorsi, era il più sconcertato di tutti. Nel repertorio del corpo musicale da lui diretto non c'era una marcia funebre!

— E glie l'ho detto, glie l'avrò detto mille volte a quelli zucconi — esclamava il maestro, asciugandosi il sudore della faccia desolata, — mille volte glie l'avrò detto: impariamola, ragazzi, una marcia funebre . . . i casi son tanti . . . non si sa mai.

— Perbacco! — interruppe il medico — gliela faccia imparare ora! Non ho detto mica che la catastrofe possa accadere da oggi a domani! . . .

— E, press' a poco, quanto potrà andare in là?

— Se fossi indovino, caro maestro, sarei ricco.

— Ma press' a poco? . . .

— Secondo le complicanze che possono sorgere, amico mio; ma è certa che quel malato lì può andare avanti benissimo . . . che so io? . . . Perché a volte quelle affezioni epatiche . . . Insomma domattina lo rivedrò e le saprò dire meglio a che punto sono le

cose . . . Scusi, maestro, quanto tempo le ci vuole per mettersi in ordine? . . .

— Per lo meno una ventina di giorni.

— E allora, lei vada tranquillo; resto garante io . . .

— Ma proprio? proprio me l'assicura?

— Lei mi conosce. Conti sulla mia parola . . .

Il maestro andò via tutto rasserenato, e la sera stessa fu messo mano alle prove della marcia funebre.

Furono prese, dalla famiglia e dagli amici, tutte le precauzioni, perché il suono degli strumenti non arrivasse alla camera del malato, ma, essendo tanto piccolo il paese e tanto vicina la sala della banda, non fu possibile ottenere lo scopo quantunque i bandisti suonassero a finestre chiuse, sudando come bestie, e fossero sopprese tutte le botte dell'ofleide e della grancassa.

Il povero Ciabatta sentiva tutto e, voltandosi nel letto dalla parte della finestra, diceva, sorridendo malinconicamente: questa la imparano per me!

— No, no, zio.

— No, signor Alcibiade.

— Ma guarda che malinconie ti vai a mettere per la testa! —

Il nipote, gli amici ed il fratello cercavano di ingannarlo, ma il povero Ciabatta non si lasciava ingannare e, con un misto di speranza, d'orgoglio soddisfatto e di rassegnato dolore:

— Questa la imparano per me! —

Una lettera anonima, diretta al Signor Alcibiade Carcassi — urgentissima, venne a scoprire tutte le batterie. Pezzo d'assassino! Ma chi sia stato quel birbaccione che, a rischio di far morire un uomo sul colpo . . . Dev'essere stato quello! Dev'essere stato quel l'altro! Figlio d'un cane!

— Se arrivo a scoprirlo gli mangio un orecchio! — urlò il maestro della banda, vedendosi minacciato della morte di Ciabatta prima del tempo.

I sospetti caddero su molte persone, ma nessuno, com'è naturale, mise gli occhi addosso a quella sola che aveva ragioni e che poteva esser capace di tanta infamia, nessuno pensò a quel figuro di Nazzario che due mesi fa era stato espulso dal corpo musicale perché s'accorsero che tutte le sere di prova, appena spenti i lumi, si metteva in tasca tre o quattro mozziconi di candela.

Ma la lettera produsse l'effetto opposto di quello che tutti si aspettavano. Appena il povero Ciabatta non ebbe più dubbi che la marcia funebre la preparavano proprio per lui, fu come metter l'olio nel lume, fu tanta la sua consolazione fu così grande la sua compiacenza che dette in un gran pianto di tenerezza e cominciò subito a migliorare a vista d'occhio.

Tutti volevano fino, da quel momento, cessare le prove, ma lui non volle; anzi valendosi dei diritti che gli accordava la sua munifica protezione al corpo musicale, impose che non solo si continuassero le prove, ma si continuassero con l'ofleide, con la grancassa e con le finestre aperte.

E così fu fatto.

Alla sesta prova egli poté strascinarsi, per sentir meglio, fino a una poltrona accanto alla finestra; e lì, beandosi, stava ad ascoltare con gli occhi umidi di tenerezza, fissi nel cielo stellato.

Che bivio terribile per quell'anima di vecchio fanciullo! Da una parte il trasporto, la banda, il lamento delle campane, il popolo schierato lungo la via, piangente e senza cappello! Dall'altra parte lo spaventoso mistero . . . forse il purgatorio . . . forse . . . ! Che orrore che orrore!

Una sincope. Quello che ci sarebbe voluto per lui sarebbe stata una sincope. Ma una di quelle sincopi a scarica fissa come le sveglie, e che lo scatto fosse accaduto appena finiti i discorsi sul feretro e innanzi il primo colpo sui chiodi della cassa.

E pensando a questa sincope il suo viso si irradiava di tanta gioia da sembrare che dagli occhi e dalle bocca gli colasse il miele fonte a fonte.

E i bandisti, uscendo dalla prova, si fermavano sotto la sua finestra a domandargli come stava.

— Va benino, va benino. Grazie giovinotti.

— Ci rallegriamo, Signor Alcibiade. Si riguardi. Buona notte, buon riposo.

E se ne andavano per la strada buia, brontolando sotto voce:

— Figlio d'un cane che pelle dura!

— Eppure guarisce davvero!

— Quello, vedete, dev'esser peggio dei rospi che, anche infilati con una canna, stanno tre giorni a sgambettare, con la pancia al sole!

— O il dottore che dice?

— Lui seguita a dire che non ne può levare le gambe.

— Speriamo! —

Il Consigliere Ciabatta intanto migliorava di giorno in giorno, e i bandisti e i molti loro aderenti tenendo il medico responsabile della bella figura che avevan fatto, provando da due mesi la marcia funebre per . . . per . . . per chi?, lo guardavano di traverso, e i più turbolenti non si peritavano a rivolgergli parole aspre e monosillabici minacciosi.

— Se Ciabatta guarisce, il medico la paga!

Ma Ciabatta andava di bene in meglio. Adagio adagio ricominciò a nutrirsi, messe più carne e colore, e gli tornò la forza nelle gambe,

tanto da cominciare a girellare per l'orto e sul marciapiede davanti a casa, reggendosi a un bastone. Gli fu prescritta la cura del sangue dalla quale ricavò vantaggi sensibilissimi, e dopo otto giorni di Montecatini, ritornò, Dio glielo perdoni, più fresco, più sano e più giovane di dieci anni.

Le prove della banda che, da qualche giorno erano state rallentate, dopo il ritorno di Ciabatta dalla Val di Nievole, furono bruscamente interrotte, e scoppiò finalmente contro il medico il malumore di tutta la popolazione, che fino allora aveva covato minaccioso in silenzio.

I muri delle case si empirono di — morte al medico — di teste di somaro e di corna incrociate col suo nome sotto. Non si salvarono dalla tempesta né sua moglie né i suoi cinque figlioli. Sputi quando passavano, parole sconce, fischi e baiate. Urli, immondizie e sassate nelle finestre la notte. Eppoi penne e vetri nel fieno del cavallo, sfregi al servitore, e finalmente tutti i cavoli dell' orto sbarbati e un gatto marcio in casa dalla finestra.

Vista la mala parata, il medico cercò di un'altra condotta, vi concorse e l'ottenne.

Il giorno che, affastellata tutta la famiglia in una diligenza e i mobili sopra un barroccio, se ne andò dal paese non ebbe né un addio né una stretta di mano, ma risa sgangherate e — *buon viaggio* — ironici di dentro alle botteghe e di dietro ai muri degli orti.

Il solo che mostrò la sua riconoscenza al medico, fu il povero Ciabatta il quale, informato della partenza del dottore, lo aspettava sulla porta per salutarlo.

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NOTE

- 1 In proposito vedi il mio saggio: "Carteggio Villari-Fucini," *Critica Storica*, A.XI, Nuova serie, N.3 (Settembre 1974), 481-90.
- 2 Giustino Fortunato (1848-1932) di Rionero in Vulture (Potenza), fu deputato al Parlamento (1880) e poi senatore (1908), pubblicò diversi libri sulla questione meridionale. Nel 1877 fece da guida al Fucini durante il suo soggiorno a Napoli. Vedi i miei due scritti: "Carteggio Fortunato-Fucini," *Critica Storica*, A.X, Nuova serie, N.4 (Dicembre 1973), 684-91, e "Fucini-Fortunato: Napoli a occhio nudo," *Critica Storica*, A.XIII, Nuova serie, N.1 (Marzo 1975), 168-75.
- 3 Confrontando il testo del Biagi col manoscritto originale per un'edizione critica, ho trovato che il Biagi ha fatto dei "tagli" a volte considerevoli.
- 4 Questo possiamo rilevarlo anche dalla scelta da lui fatta per un'Antologia degli scritti di Renato Fucini, per le scuole e per le famiglie, con alcune pagine inedite e con note di Guido Biagi (Firenze, 1923).
- 5 Vedi il capitolo quarto del mio saggio *Renato Fucini l'uomo e l'opera* (Firenze, 1977).
- 6 Per un'analisi dettagliata vedi il mio *Renato Fucini*.

PICCOLA BIBLIOTECA

MAUDA BREGOLI-RUSSO. *Boiardo lirico*. Potomac, Md: José Por-rúa Turanzas, S.A., 1979. Pp. 204 (Studia Humanitatis).

Come si legge fin dalle prime righe, il presente studio si occupa esclusivamente degli *Amorum libri* allo scopo di dimostrarne l'unità, senza soffermarsi sugli aspetti lirici delle altre opere del Boiardo, prima di tutte l'*Orlando Innamorato*; e si apre con una "Introduzione" nella quale è compresa una rapida rassegna della critica precedente del canzoniere, ordinata in senso tematico, dove l'accento batte soprattutto sugli aspetti che più interessano l'autrice e che vediamo sviluppati nelle pagine successive.

Nel primo capitolo ("Civiltà letteraria e tradizioni linguistiche nell'ambiente ferrarese del Quattrocento") la Bregoli-Russo esamina l'atmosfera culturale della Ferrara dei tempi del Boiardo e i rapporti del poeta con scrittori precedenti della tradizione lirica europea. Mediante un uso preciso e accurato delle fonti critiche, vediamo prima di tutto messo in risalto l'aspetto composito della cultura della capitale degli Estensi, con particolare attenzione per il genere lirico che si orienta "sempre più verso un petrarchismo ortodosso ed esclusivo" (p.21), del tipo di quello codificato più tardi dal Bembo. Si passa quindi all'influsso esercitato sul Boiardo dai Provenzali, dagli Stilnovisti e soprattutto da Petrarca, per giungere significativamente alla stessa conclusione spesso indicata dai critici dell'*Innamorato*: il modo di imitare dello Scandianese è sempre assai originale e non esclude una chiara componente di ispirazione individuale.

Forse meno convincente è il secondo capitolo ("L'occasione poetica") — anche se non mancano osservazioni assai originali e interessanti — nel quale si prende lo spunto da alcune affermazioni dello Scaglione per quanto riguarda il "tono idillico" (p.44) del Boiardo, del De Robertis sul trapasso dall'esperienza lirica a quella della narrativa cavalleresca, e in massima parte dello Zottoli per il quale la corte di Ferrara condizionerebbe completamente l'opera dello scrittore; mentre la critica più recente ha riconosciuto che la corte del poeta è una costruzione ideale, che ha molto poco da spartire con quella storica.

Più puntuale ed illuminante nel terzo capitolo ("Contenuti e strumenti espressivi") l'analisi condotta dall'autrice di numerose liriche, analisi tendente a chiarire l'uso dell'allegoria nel Boiardo, il senso di movimento (lessicale e semantico) che caratterizza la sua poesia, le componenti tardogotiche e quelle di derivazione classica, la predilezione per forme metriche complesse ed estremamente elaborate, e il valore di esperienza autobiografica esemplare cui lo Scandianese mira nella strutturazione del suo canzoniere. Molto appropriati sono i numerosi riscontri stabiliti fra le immagini del poeta e la contemporanea pittura ferrarese, in particolare gli affreschi del Salone dei Mesi di Palazzo Schifanoia: anche se, data l'incertezza delle datazioni, non è sempre il caso di parlare di influssi della seconda sulle prime (né delle prime sulla seconda), ma piuttosto di una temperie spirituale e di un gusto comuni che si esprimono in maniera analoga in differenti manifestazioni artistiche.

Altrettanto rilevante la complessa indagine compiuta nel quarto capitolo ("La rappresentazione della donna e dell'amore") su altri aspetti del canzoniere boiardesco, quali l'impossibilità del poeta tanto di descrivere la bellezza della donna quanto di conseguirne l'amore, l'impiego caratteristico degli adynata e il motivo della gelosia, l'unico dal quale si delinei in qualche modo la figura dell'amata in termini autobiografici e concreti. Si tende soprattutto a mettere in risalto l'originalità del Boiardo nei confronti dei lirici, contemporanei e posteriori, che imitano il Petrarca.

Nell'ultimo capitolo infine ("La natura come proiezione dell'io poetico") viene accuratamente esaminato l'impiego della natura nel canzoniere e se ne mettono in risalto le varie funzioni, sempre tenendo presenti vari spunti di critici precedenti (quali il Contini, il Bigi e lo Scaglione), approfondendone i significati e avvalorandone le conclusioni. Attraverso l'analisi di numerosi componimenti si chiarisce come la natura rispecchi l'animo del poeta, gioioso nel primo libro quando l'amore è ricambiato, amareggiato nel secondo per l'abbandono della donna, più distaccato nel terzo in cui il Boiardo si ripiega su toni di malinconico ricordo; mentre il mito dell'età dell'oro acquista in lui un valore tutto particolare, un segno del distacco fra il presente e l'irraggiungibile passato, e in questa sottolineata impossibilità di raggiungerlo vede l'autrice un'altra conferma del fatto che "gli'impossibilita' o l'ineffabile" costituiscono "il contenuto autentico degli *Amores*" (p.148).

La breve "Conclusione" riprende rapidamente alcuni dei punti fondamentali emersi nel corso del discorso, sottolineando la genesi in gran parte letteraria del canzoniere (giudizio che ci trova affatto concordi), accennando ad alcuni problemi di natura filologica, ed indicando diverse prospettive per il prossimo lavoro della critica boiardesca, in direzione psicanalitica e semiologica. E forse proprio nell'apertura soprattutto verso la prima di quelle direzioni consiste uno dei pregi più rilevanti di questo volume, ricco di spunti che approfondiscono in possibilità ancora affatto trascurate la psicologia del Boiardo poeta. La Bregoli-Russo sembra spesso intravvedere e accennare a un mondo di complessi significati intimi, di risonanze remote, di sfumate allusioni da cui potrebbe emergere tutta una nuova valutazione dell'opera dello Scandianese. C'è da augurarsi che la critica futura non lasci cadere senza approfondirla questa prospettiva interiore orientata, in un senso più nuovo e più disponibile di quanto non si sia fatto nel passato, verso un tipo di indagine quale quello sollevato in questo *Boiardo lirico*.

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MARIA CORTI. *Il viaggio testuale: Le ideologie e le strutture semiotiche*.
 Torino: Einaudi Paperbacks 90, 1978. Pp.302.

La ricerca costituente il filone principale di questo nuovo libro della Corti

“è nata come applicazione degli strumenti semiotici d’indagine offerti nei *Principi della comunicazione letteraria* e nello stesso tempo prova del loro grado di funzionalità (p.16) avverte la studiosa nel preambolo ai nove studi, di cui solo i primi due e l’ultimo erano già stati precedentemente editi, mentre questi, con i rimanenti sei, appaiono qui per la prima volta uniti da una visibilissima coerenza di intenti e di metodologia.

Che il precedente libro della Corti (Milano: Studi Bompiani, 1976. Pp.200) costituisse una tappa importante nel lavoro di sistematizzazione critica operato da questa studiosa nell’ultimo decennio ci era già noto, ma che i termini ed i concetti colà elaborati fossero poi ripresi ed assunti con tanta incalzante regolarità in quest’ultimo lavoro ci lascia non poco compiaciuti, soprattutto di fronte alla notoria labilità di molti buoni propositi di sistemazione critica — anche da parte di grandi studiosi — subito dilavati dall’azione corrosiva del tempo. Va tuttavia notato che i costanti richiami della Corti alla sua opera precedente (vedi, ad es., a p.49, e poi ancora alle pp.74, 79, 132, ecc.) non rientrano in una insistita riaffermazione delle proprie teorie critiche, ma rivelano piuttosto il loro spontaneo manifestarsi nel corso del “viaggio testuale.” Così dell’armonia dei rapporti all’interno dell’opera letteraria, rapporti “che sono suoi e non della realtà” (p.8), riemerge subito nella mente di chi ha seguito questa studiosa negli ultimi anni il suo precedente paragrafo sulla “grammatica della visione,” contenuto nei *Principi*, cui rimanda una nota a pie’ di pagina.

Ciò nonostante la Corti si mantiene libera da eccessive categorizzazioni, e se le precedenti conquiste la sorreggono in questo compito, certo non la vincolano di fronte ad una materia del tutto nuova, che spesse volte appare tanto enigmatica quanto la grazia divina, al punto che se è vero che le “pinze della ricerca agguerrita” colgono l’essenza dell’opera, spesso avviene che un inesperto di metodologie critiche “sa poi viaggiare dentro un testo” (p.5).

Orbene, cos’è dunque questo “viaggio testuale” che ci propone la Corti, come si sviluppa, quali tappe tocca e a quali nuovi porti approda? La rotta principale della studiosa è determinata da una mirabile visione, che la ipnotizza, e alla quale fanno costante ritorno tutte le indagini del testo; si tratta dei “possibili” infiniti della creazione letteraria, al di qua e al di là dei quali stanno tutte “le soluzioni abortite che finiranno nel limbo silenzioso della letteratura e continueranno ad esistere” (pp. 5-6). Questa infaticabile indagatrice intuisce lucidamente che l’opera letteraria fruibile al lettore non è che un documento superstite del tortuoso *iter* scrittoria, di cui va perduta “la dinamica delle successioni, cui si lega la metafora del viaggio” (p.6). E allora, si chiede giustamente la Corti, “Chi osa qui porre confini tra la ricerca vitale e quella poetica del cammino? Tra il cammino della poesia e della sua scrittura?” (p.7).

Riflettendo sulla disorientante pluralità che si presenta allo scrittore di fronte alla realtà nell’imminenza dell’atto scrittoria, la studiosa afferma ancora una volta che le scelte sono pressoché infinite e che l’artista letterato può compiere lo stesso viaggio che i suoi predecessori, ma con esiti sempre diversi. Vi è tuttavia un pericolo, avverte la Corti, che è costituito dalla “volontà del testo” (p.8). Fatte cioè certe scelte iniziali, “l’opera viene ad essere fornita di intelligenza e di respiro,” tanto che non si può più dire se sia lei, o lo scrittore “a dettare la direzione” (p.9). Sono quindi le scelte iniziali che contano di più, che predeterminano il

tracciato, ed un errore di rotta in tale fase significherebbe cadere nel già "codificato," mentre invece è compito precipuo dell'artista rinvenire "nuovi rapporti . . . nuove relazione fra le immagini del reale," tracciando un "percorso verso un modo alternativo di vedere le cose, modo che esiste come potenzialità umana, come tesoro di mondi possibili" (p.8).

Le epoche privilegiate dalla studiosa in questa indagine sono due, il Novecento e il Duecento. Per quanto riguarda il Novecento la Corti conduce a termine una delle più lucide indagini sul trentennio 1945-75, che ella suddivide non arbitrariamente, ma in virtù di fasi successive di "tipologia della cultura." La società, sostiene la studiosa, crea le proprie ideologie, che sono "modelli di lettura del mondo" e, a loro volta, questi modelli non sono altro che delle "strutture semiotiche." In soluzione diacronica queste strutture creano a loro volta dei processi semiotici conflittuali, da cui originano dei "campi di tensioni" (pp.22-23). È proprio in base a questi "campi" che la Corti data le origini del Neorealismo (1945), del Neoavanguardismo (1960) e del Neosperimentalismo (1970).

Meriterebbe qui ben più dettagliato esame lo studio del Neorealismo che conduce la Corti, forse il più completo che ci sia stato dato di leggere in questi ultimissimi anni, e certo il più alieno da confusioni e da pseudoproblematiche. Distinzioni di carattere ideologico, tematico e stilistico fanno giustizia di molte delle querele sorte intorno all'essenza e alla periodizzazione di questa mitica epoca della recente letteratura italiana. Con una tecnica che è ormai tipica della Corti, essa passa dal lucido enunciato delle proprie teorie ad una magistrale verifica di esse sui testi, citati e postillati con rara perizia filologica, additando nella tradizione orale, nella stampa clandestina e nella esperienza resistenziale i fatti costitutivi di questa nuova letteratura. Dall'*engagement* che spirava da tutta quest'aura letteraria la Corti traccia poi i contatti tra la materia grezza del neorealismo e gli artigiani più raffinati che ne desunsero i modi ed i temi (p.48 e passim), non senza perdere d'occhio i limiti del movimento nel corso del quale, non di rado, "vi fu molta sproporzione . . . fra effetti desiderati ed effetti raggiunti" (p.36).

Un latente dissenso esprime nei riguardi del Neoavanguardismo, pur riconoscendone l'onestà di base e la sua prorompente iconoclastia. Assai più conciliante e positivo l'atteggiamento della Corti nei riguardi del Neosperimentalismo, la cui combattività verso la mercificazione e standardizzazione del prodotto letterario sono meno eversive che quelle dimostrate dal Neoavanguardismo, ma assai più "astutamente costruttive a livello sia tematico sia formale" (p.133).

Italo Calvino è senz'altro lo scrittore-chiave del discorso della Corti in quanto esemplifica con la sua accortissima ricerca dei possibili "viaggi" attuabili di fronte ad una determinata materia meglio di ogni altro contemporaneo l'assunto di questo studio. Particolare attenzione è dedicata a *Il castello dei destini incrociati*, dove "crescono le proporzioni fantastiche dell'invenzione e nel contempo cresce la coscienza semiotica dello scrittore" (p.169). A questo punto la studiosa ricollega il processo creativo di Calvino al suo discorso iniziale sul viaggio testuale, affermando che la cartomanzia in Calvino è dovuta "all'avvertita sua coscienza semiotica del processo genetico dell'invenzione, dell'atto per cui possibilità plurime, spinte inventive in diverse direzioni vengono selezionate in un oggetto specifico . . . che rappresenta quindi una forma di chiusura tematico-formale" (p.173).

Estremamente coerente a questo assunto di studio è anche la sezione del libro dedicata al Duecento, nel corso della quale la Corti passa in rassegna (con altrettanta mirabile perizia testuale) le "Ideologie e strutture semiotiche nei *Sermones ad status* del secolo XIII," "Dante e la Torre di Babele" ed infine "Il genere *disputatio* e la transcodificazione indolore di Bonvesin de la Riva." In un discorso che non perde nulla della sua specificità scientifica pur mantenendosi avvincente e serratissimo nelle sue brillanti conclusioni e schematizzazioni (caratteristica costante del metodo di lavoro di questa studiosa che, alla teoria fa invariabilmente seguire l'analisi e quindi uno schema con le sue conclusioni finali), la Corti insegue in questi documenti medievali la prova della fondamentale divergenza tra simbolo e cosa ("netta separazione esistenziale fra realtà esistenziale e segnica," p.223), da cui ne risulta una plurivalenza del simbolo. La tensione che emanerà dal lento sfasarsi della gerarchizzazione verticale auspicata in questi trattati rispetto a quella orizzontale operantesi nella società medievale porta ad un rovesciamento degli influssi tra realtà e modelli, per cui non si va più da quella a questi, ma bensì dai modelli astratti alla realtà. Ne sorgono nuove sfere di indagine del possibile *iter* scrittoria, con un sorprendente accostamento al modello già osservato nel Novecento in fase resistenziale e post-resistenziale.

Il libro, corredata da un abbondante *corpus* di note a pie' di pagina, e costellato di azzeccatissime quanto dotte citazioni dai più autorevole studi nelle discipline attigue, presenta quella semplicità espositiva che, nulla togliendo al geniale impianto della ricerca cortiana, ne fa un utile strumento di formazione e di lettura anche per i meno abbienti e certo una tappa obbligatoria della documentazione letteraria contemporanea.

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